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**The Tensions of Mobilizing Emergent Tactics: Lessons from the Standing
Rock Occupation***

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Word Count: 11,738

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Abstract

The Dakota Access Pipeline is an oil pipeline that sparked a massive uprising in the fall of 2016 due to its environmental impacts, and violation of Native treaty rights. Upwards of 10,000 people participated in the six-month-long occupation in North Dakota and there were hundreds of injuries and arrests. What sparked this tactical innovation? And what tensions arose from this strategy? In an attempt to answer these questions, I have interviewed water protectors who participated in the occupation, and analyzed interview records with movement leaders. From this research, I conclude that the limited resources available to the movement led to innovative tactics that took the form of a prefigurative political community. This created tension in the movement because prefigurative communities are intentionally designed whereas tactical innovation is emergent. There are three tensions that arose from this tension between being prefigurative and innovative: cultivating community among thousands of strangers, the complexities of welcoming everyone and anyone into the camp, and implementing a non-hierarchical leadership structure. This research expands on tactical innovation scholarship by demonstrating how resources can serve as a catalyst for innovation, and further complicates the implications of innovation.

In the fall of 2016, upwards of 10,000 people descended on the Standing Rock Reservation, to participate in a six-month-long, frontline encampment to resist the Dakota Access Pipeline. The \$3.8 billion, 1,172 mile underground oil pipeline, owned by Canadian company, Energy Transfer Partners, sparked resistance because of its violation of Native treaty rights and threat to the water and climate. Aggressive response to the movement from law enforcement agencies led to hundreds of arrests and injuries and cost the state \$40 million for police, fire, repairing damaged infrastructure, cleaning-up protest camps, and prosecutions (Brady 2018). While the movement was built on the foundation laid by generations of Indigenous resistance to white colonization, the encampment materialized in a way that no one could have predicted, and that demonstrates how innovative and revolutionary the movement was (Estes and Dhillon, 2019: 1).

The encampment began on April 1st, 2016, when Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota people rode horses to the confluence of the Missouri and Cannonball rivers and established a camp there. The founders of the camp argued that the construction of the pipeline violated the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty, which guarantees the Lakota people the land that they occupied as reservation land. This treaty was first violated by the U.S. Army in 1876 when gold was discovered in the Black Hills and settlers rushed to the area. When the Lakota and Cheyenne refused to give up their land, the U.S. responded with military action, starting the Great Sioux War. The result of this war was the annexation of Lakota land and permanent establishment of reservations. In 1889, the Fort Laramie Treaty was violated again when the U.S. government broke up the Great Sioux

Reservation into five smaller reservations, enforcing private property ownership, agriculture, and residential schools.

In February 2015, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers initiated their review of the Dakota Access Pipeline Project. Ten months later, the Corps published their Environmental Assessment that stated that “the Standing Rock THPO [Tribal Historic Preservation Officers] had indicated to DAPL that the Lake Oahu site avoided impacts to tribally significant sites.” This report sparked controversy in both tribal and U.S. governments. The Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of Interior, and the American Council on Historic Preservation submitted letters to the Corps of Engineers, criticizing their lack of tribal consultation. Other tribes, including the Osage Nation and the Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma THPO, that also have ancestral lands along the route of the pipeline also voiced concerns in solidarity with the Standing Rock tribe.

When the camp was first established, there were only a few teepees and a dozen or so activists that lived there. These activists were frustrated with the lack of action from the tribal council and wanted to create a space to gather ideas to stop the pipeline, or the Black Snake, and skills that were developed in the movement to stop the Keystone XL pipeline. Throughout the summer, members of the pipeline resistance network heard about the encampment and began to join, but the number of participants remained relatively small. In July, a group of youth from the camp began a 2,000 mile relay in which they ran from the camp to the Army Corps of Engineers office in Washington, D.C. As these grassroots tactics began to develop, legal challenges were also pursued. In

August 2016, the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, represented by Earthjustice, filed an injunction, suing the Army Corps of Engineers. Shortly after this, Energy Transfer Partners sued the tribal chairman, and other tribal members, for blocking construction.

Participation at the camp began to exponentially increase, after Democracy Now! recorded footage of DAPL security guards attacking water protectors with dogs. The video recording of security dogs with blood on their mouths from biting water protectors went viral, and the larger public became aware of the encampment. While it was challenging to keep an accurate count of participants as additional camps developed and participants came and left, organizers and media estimate that throughout the duration of the encampment, upwards of ten thousand people participated. Dangerous interactions with law enforcement escalated to a degree that caused Amnesty International and the United Nations to speak out against the violation of the human right to peacefully protest.

On December 4th, 2016, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers denied the necessary permit for Energy Transfer Partners to drill underneath Lake Oahe, officially halting construction for the project. At this point, Tribal Chairman David Archambault II called for all water protectors to evacuate the camp. Many left at this point, and elders extinguished the Seven Council Fires, which had been burning since the camp began. Young water protectors relit a new fire and committed to remain at the camp despite the Chairman's order to leave. On January 24th, less than a week into his presidency, Trump signed an executive memorandum that ordered DAPL and Keystone XL pipelines be

reviewed and approved in an expedited manner. A few days later, the Army Corps gave notice to Congress that DAPL construction will resume.

As DAPL construction restarted, the smaller encampment continued to attempt to resist the project. But the movement lost the mass media attention and large participation it previously had. On February 22nd, North Dakota officials gave water protectors until 2pm to evacuate. More than 100 people refused to leave until officials forced them to, arresting those most resistant, and destroyed what remained at the camp.

This movement was innovative, prefigurative, and served as a turning point for the environmental justice movement. It redefined what tactics were possible when resisting pipelines. Previous scholarship on tactical innovation claims that innovation occurs as a response to macro-historical context, movement characteristics, and the number of different movements involved in a protest event (McCammon 2012, Wang and Soule 2016, Tilly 1978). Examining Standing Rock contributes to this research by providing a case where available resources served as a catalyst for innovation. The primary tactic employed was a large scale, long term, encampment which served as a prefigurative political community, meaning a community that sought to live out the values they were advocating for (Taylor and Whittier 1992: 117). This event will surely be looked back upon as a significant moment in the movement towards environmental justice as it engaged a vast array of people over an issue that most had never previously heard of.

What defined the intra-movement dynamics at the camp? Who were the movement leaders and how did they seek to exert a degree of control over movement participants? Answering these questions point us towards larger theoretical questions: What tensions arise in the midst of innovation? What do these tensions tell us about innovation as an indicator of movement success? The primary feature of the camp that defined the intra-movement dynamics of the movement is the fact that it was a prefigurative political community. Standing Rock is a compelling case study for prefigurative politics because my research shows that living out the movement's values served as one of the greatest strengths to the movement, as well as the cause of significant tensions within the camp. This prefigurative political community, combined with the limited resources available to the movement, resulted in tactical innovation. Movement leaders had one primary resource available to them: land. Using this resource, while enacting prefigurative politics, resulted in movement leaders innovating a tactic: a large scale, long term, frontline encampment. We can learn from this historic moment and seek to understand how the encampment played out and how movement participants engaged with the camp to inform future activism and social movement theory of this tactic.

Literature Review

There is an expansive amount of scholarship on both tactical innovation and prefigurative politics. From this, we know that tactical innovation is sparked by external

(Tilly 1978) or internal (McCamom 2012) characteristics of the movement. My research expands on this work by examining how resources can be used to spark innovation.

Furthermore, there is limited research available for the results of combining tactical innovation and prefigurative political communities and the contradictions that arise from this. I also further the scholarship on prefigurative political communities by analyzing this phenomenon from a sociological perspective by considering how the utilization of prefigurative politics informs hierarchy, control of participants, and social networks in a movement. The following literature review will start by describing the movement through the frames employed by leaders, then I will describe the existing research available on both tactical innovation and prefigurative political communities, and show the gap that I seek to fill.

Environmental justice framework

Framing is a process that involves social movements using symbols that have existing cultural beliefs and manipulating them into new modes of thinking through collective action (Snow and Benford 1988). There are two types of frames; collective action frames that shape the meaning for a specific action, and master frames that assign meaning for an entire movement. The collective action frame used in the #NoDAPL movement was one of Indigenous sovereignty and treaty rights. The occupation was framed as a “continuation of the Indian wars of extermination” (Estes and Dhillon 2019:

5). This can be seen in the artwork displayed at rallies across the county and in conversations with movement leaders.

The Standing Rock Occupation utilized a master frame of environmental justice to shape their purpose for mobilizing and to recruit others. The environmental justice movement emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s from communities of color and impoverished communities across the United States who are disproportionately suffering from environmental hazards (Bullard, 2000; Gottlieb, 1993). Environmental justice seeks to redefine environmentalism as more integrated with social needs. Its central goal is to challenge the capitalist growth economy that causes environmental injustices (Pellow and Brulle, 2005). Poor communities and communities of color are the first to suffer the impacts of climate change and ecological degradation, and they have also been the first communities to rise up and challenge these conditions (Pellow and Brulle, 2005). The Dakota Access Pipeline was originally routed in close proximity to Bismarck, North Dakota - a city that is about 90% white. Bismarck residents objected to this route because it crossed the Missouri River, their source of drinking water, and they were afraid of the risk of a spill. And so the pipeline was rerouted onto ceded treaty land. Kim Tallbear explains that “this is not a movement in which there are two separate issues that just happen to align around the Oceti Sakowin resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline”, but rather two issues, Indigenous rights and environmental justice, that are intrinsically linked and cannot be separated (Estes and Dhillon 2019: 17).

Tactical innovation

Tactical innovation has been defined in two ways: the emergence of new protest tactics or the novel recombination of existing tactics (Wang and Soule 2016: 518). Tactical innovation is significant because social movement scholarship shows that increased tactical innovation results in increased movement success. Those who participated in movements that challenge the status quo, often lack institutional power and therefore, in order to be successful, their tactics must offset this powerlessness (McAdam 1983: 735). Movements have the ability to build power by innovating new tactics and their opponents do not know how to respond. This gives activists a temporary advantage, until their opponents adapt to their new tactics and neutralize them, reinstating the power disparity (McAdam 1983: 735). Furthermore, innovation does not just assist in achieving movements demands, but also sustains participation in movement organization because enthusiasm for being part of an innovator builds (Dosh 2009: 92).

There are two primary foci on how movements become tactically innovative; in reactions to changes outside of a movement, and to internal movement processes. Some argue that a social movement has a repertoire of protest tactics which slowly evolves according to external changes such as the nature and scope of political authority and technology (Tilly 1978: 158). This relates to how movements are innovative in order to offset their powerlessness by surprising opponents with new tactics. Tarrow (1995) explains that innovation occurs at the beginning of a protest cycle which is initiated by factors external to a movement, such as a shift in political power.

Conversely, McCammon (2012) argues that it is internal movement characteristics that influence the ability for movements to innovate and adapt. The most prominent internal characteristic that can promote or stifle innovation is the movement's structure. Staggenborg discovers, in her comparative study of two women's rights organizations, that informal, decentralized structures encourage strategic and tactical innovation, but impaired organizational maintenance. Formalized and centralized structure supported maintenance, but limited the strategies and tactics employed by the organization (Staggenborg 1988: 75). This builds upon the research done by Piven and Cloward (1979) that found that tactical innovation is limited when movements are structured around formal organizations. Access to resources could be considered an internal movement characteristic, but has not been studied in relation to tactical innovation of a movement.

Wang and Soule (2016) find that, in addition to macro-historical context and the internal characteristics of a movement, interaction of different movements inform innovation as well. They find that "multi-issue protest events are more likely to use novel recombinations of tactics, and protest events with more peripheral movement claims tend to introduce new protest tactics" (Wang and Soule 2016: 517). Standing Rock serves as an example of two issues that are too often thought of as separate, environmental care and Indigenous sovereignty, that are actually intrinsically linked. The #NoDAPL movement further expands on this scholarship by demonstrating that, in addition to internal, external, and multi-issue factors, resources available to a movement can also spark

innovation. Land was one of the only resources that water protectors had at the onset of the occupation and in utilizing this resource, they innovated a new tactic. And in this case, the innovation was shaped by a prefigurative political community being fostered.

Prefigurative politics

A prefigurative political community is when the end goal of the political movement is enacted in the movement's day-to-day existence. Prefigurative political communities argue that "the ends a social movement achieves are fundamentally shaped by the means it employs, and that movements should therefore do their best to choose means that embody or 'prefigure' the kind of society they want to bring about" (Leach 2013: 1). Prefigurative movements began with anarchist and syndicalist organizations working to resist the early stages of industrialization and bureaucratization in Europe. A central pillar to prefigurative politics has historically been participatory democracy, or the idea that there must be broad participation of constituents in the operation of political systems (Breines 1989: 57).

This strategy is viewed by activists as an alternative to vanguardist and structural-reformist strategies for social change because it does not rely on a revolutionary vanguard to overturn power structures and implement radical change but instead develops counter-hegemonic institutions that embody the sought-after transformation. This phenomenon is described by Nick Estes and Jaskiran Dhillon, both Indigenous scholars and water protectors at Standing Rock, when they said that "the good people of the earth have

always been the vanguards of history and radical social change. Such was the case at Standing Rock: everyday people taking control of their lives.” (Estes and Dhillon 2019: 4). The ability for participants to enact change from within their own communities is a strength to prefigurative communities.

However, these prefigurative communities come with their own set of challenges. Most of which come from the fact that living in community with strangers is difficult and often causes tensions. Judith Butler, when analyzing the Occupy Wall Street encampment, explains that:

[Bodies] are themselves modalities of power, embodied interpretations, engaging in allied action. On the one hand, these bodies are productive and performative. On the other hand, they can only persist and act when they are supported by environments, by nutrition, by work, by modes of sociality and belonging. (Butler, 2011: 11)

Butler is describing a phenomenon that occurred in the Occupy Movement but is also applicable to the Standing Rock encampment. The activists are collectivizing spaces that they believe they have a right to, but that right is being threatened. They share in food and community and are therefore interdependent. They experience both the joys and difficulties of being together. And from this they develop rules for living together that are grounded in respect of each other and the land. This creates a community where people's needs are met and they feel cared for.

However, creating spaces which provide for the needs of thousands of people is challenging, some might say impossible. It takes a great deal of planning and organizing.

And so a tension arises. Prefigurative political communities require preparation, but tactical innovation is, by definition, emergent. What happens when they are combined? My research describes and analyzes this tension and how it influenced dynamics at the camp and movement success.

Methods

I employed qualitative methods in this research, and therefore, any discussion of methods must first begin with a conversation of trust. Trust, both others trust of myself, and my trust of others, played an integral role in who I spoke to, what they shared, and how I interpreted the information they provided me with. The primary source of data collected for this analysis came from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with people who participated in the encampment and experienced the prefigurative political community. This method was critical for me to gain an understanding of participants' experiences at the encampment and discern what they thought worked well at the camp and what caused tensions. However, it required that the people I spoke be vulnerable and share extensively on an event that was, and continues to be, emotional and intense. And required them to trust me to conceal their identity and accurately represent what they were sharing in my paper.

I personally identify as a white woman, who grew up in a middle income household, and is currently a student at a private college in St. Paul. In many ways, these

identities make me an outsider to the pipeline resistance and Indigenous rights movements. The fact that I am not Indigenous, and my affiliation with a privileged institution such as Macalester, could, in part, explain why I never heard back from the many water protectors that I found online and reached out to about my project. For these people, I had no one that they knew that could legitimize my request, and initiate trust between us. And this trust is essential, especially given the shameful history of white academics abusing the trust of research participants. This lack of trust was also present in my outreach to law enforcement in the Morton County area. I had no personal connection to law enforcement there, or anywhere for that matter, so I was blindly contacting general information emails.

However, I am not entirely an outsider to this movement. Over the past three years, I have been deeply involved in the movement to stop Line 3, a proposed tar sands oil pipeline in Minnesota. Of the ten people I interviewed, I had some kind of personal connection to nine of them, largely from this organizing work. Five of the people I interviewed, I work with closely on this campaign. There is a great deal of overlap between these movements due to the proximity in location and similarity of the projects, so several of the people I work with were involved in the Standing Rock Occupation. This resulted in a higher degree of trust on both sides of the interview; interviewees trusted me to accurately represent their experience in my research, and I trusted their accounts because of existing credibility.

Additionally, it is important to note that I did travel to Standing Rock in November 2016 to stand in solidarity with water protectors there. This experience informed how I understood the data I collected and how I conceptualized the camp operations and structure. Many of the people I interviewed knew that I participated in the encampment and this caused them to not always describe things in detail because they assumed I already knew. Also, several people made comparisons to the Line 3 movement as a way of conveying how they experienced the Standing Rock Movement. Therefore, my involvement in local pipeline resistance efforts informed who I was able to speak with, as well as how they presented their experiences to me.

My insider status in the Line 3 movement helped connect me with people, but also limited the perspectives included in my interviews, seeing as only one person I spoke with was from Standing Rock and only two were Indigenous. To address this limitation, I utilized the extensive interview records that Amy Goodman and Juan Gonzáles have with water protectors, from their coverage of the occupation on *Democracy Now!*. From these interviews, I was able to include the voices of leaders within the movement: LaDonna Brave Bull Allard, the owner of the land that Oceti Sakowin was situated on, youth leaders Jasilyn Charger, and Bobbi Jean Three Legs, and tribal chairman Dave Archambault II, among others. I watched about a dozen of these interviews, and analyzed five of them for my data. These interviews made my data more robust, included necessary perspectives and filled some of the gaps in my interviews. From these sources, I have gained a well-rounded understanding of what transpired at Standing Rock, the

tensions that arose at the encampment, and the success of Standing Rock by way of considering how it influences current movements.

I completed eight interviews between June and October of 2019, each lasting an average of an hour. In February and March of 2020 I conducted another phase of interviews with two additional people. Five of the interviews were done in person, four at coffee shops and restaurants, and one in the person's office. For all of these interviews, I recorded them on my phone and later transcribed them. For the five phone interviews, I took extensive notes during the conversation, recorded myself immediately after the interview recounting the interview and transcribed this memo. I told each of the participants that I would remove any identifying information when writing the paper. Two of the interviewees, Ron and Desiree, informed me that I do not need to change their names. To honor their request, and to give these participants credit for the work they did and their contributions to this research, I have used their real names.

Why Standing Rock?

I was initially drawn to the case study of the Standing Rock Occupation because, at the onset of this movement, it had few markings of a potentially powerful event. Sharp (2013) describes six sources of political power; authority, human resources, skills and knowledge, intangible factors, material resources, and sanction. The Standing Rock reservation is situated in rural North Dakota, about an eight-hour drive from the next major metropolis. The tribe is not excessively wealthy nor had the infrastructure to

support the mass mobilization that occurred there. Tribal rights, their main legal argument, have been persistently ignored by the U.S. government for all of history. Few people in the country, prior to this case, were aware of tar sands oil pipelines or the concept of environmental justice. And, as was made clear throughout the duration of the occupation, the sanctions for breaking the rule of law in the region were high. Water protectors used the one resource available to them, land, and enacted a prefigurative political community that was innovative and drew people in. I was intrigued by this case study because I wanted to try and figure out what made it possible for an encampment to capture the public eye in the way that it did and grow to such a large scale. But as I was conducting my interviews, there was a recurring theme of tactical innovation. This led me to explore this topic in the literature and I was struck by the importance of innovation on movement success. From this initial research, it seemed like Standing Rock could contribute to these theories and so I focused my research on innovation.

Terminology

Throughout this paper, I refer to the Native activists at the camp as “water protectors” because this is how the movement participants referred to themselves. A young Native woman told BuzzFeed that “the term protester is a colonized term for standing up for what's right.” (Buzzfeed News 2016). In an effort to honor the language employed by activists at the camp and minimize colonized language, I exclusively use the term water protector when referring to Native activists. I refer to white people who

participated in the camp as ‘white allies’. I do not use this term to imply that they were effective allies to the movement, but similarly because they referred to themselves as white allies. Lastly, while I refer to “the camp” throughout the paper, there actually were several different camps in the region including Oceti Sakowin, Rosebud Camp, Red Warrior Camp and Sacred Stone Camp. When I say “the camp”, I am referring to Oceti Sakowin because it was the first, and largest camp.

Data analysis

The Standing Rock encampment was distinct and unlike other encampments that have developed in other movements. Every day at the main camp began with a ceremony around a sacred fire and smudging all participants. These spiritual practices were incorporated into the daily lives of all participants at the camp, including white allies. One older white ally at the camp compared Oceti Sakowin to another frontline camp resisting a different pipeline that he had visited the following year: at Oceti Sakowin “[spirituality] pervaded there. The Sacred fire was lit and it was the center....At [another resistance camp], as soon as I drove in there, it just looked like a survivalist camp...I just knew it wasn’t going to hold.” In the following section, I begin by analyzing the data that I collected to describe how the camp developed and how resource availability informed this development. I will then describe the ways in which this innovative encampment embodied prefigurative politics. After introducing these two fundamental concepts, I will analyze the three tensions that arose from the conflict between prefiguration and

emergent tactics: cultivating community among thousands of strangers, the complexities of welcoming everyone and anyone into the camp, and implementing a non-hierarchical leadership structure.

Tactical Innovation at Standing Rock

It is highly unusual for a mass social movement to engage movement participants in a living community at the scale that occurred at Standing Rock. Thousands of people lived together, ate together, prayed together, and worked to stop a pipeline together. Liam, a pipeline resistance organizer based in Minneapolis explained to me that he first traveled to Standing Rock in July because:

Knowing that there was a camp that people were camping out was kind of more of a novel thing at that point... There were people that were having conversations about ‘what does direct action to block an underground drilling rig look like? And what are the tactics that are even applicable here? We can’t really do tree sits, there are no trees. So you know these kinds of things. Just trying to develop like a tactical library.

A young Native activist, Jasilyn Charger, attended an organizing meeting that occurred on February 26th 2016 where leaders from North and South Dakota came together to determine their strategy for resisting the Dakota Access Pipeline. She said that in the meeting, LaDonna [Bravebull Allard], “stepped forth, and she said “I offer my land. I offer any support. You can do whatever you want with it. And I need help, because my land is right next to the river. My son is buried there. My sage grows there, my

medicine. It has been passed down through my family”” (Jasilyn Charger interviewed by Amy Goodman, 2017). This description of the start of the camp demonstrates how the NoDAPL movement used the very limited resources available to them. The reservation is in rural North Dakota, almost eight hours from a large urban area. This lack of people present in the region made most traditional forms of social movement organizing impossible. The tribe did not have excessive wealth nor an existing large base of movement actors. However, as demonstrated from the quote from LaDonna Brave Bull Allard, what they had was land. And they were able to use this land to reinvent what pipeline resistance looks like. When LaDonna says “you can do whatever you want with [my land]”, this indicates that there were very limited options of organizing tactics available to activists and they were making do with whatever they had. This demonstrates that the choice of tactics was not prefigurative, it was emergent.

Because this tactic had never been done before, very few people thought it would be possible. Charger explained later in her interview that “in the beginning, like nobody really supported us. People really told us that we couldn’t change it, that it was going to go through, that it was pointless camping” (Jasilyn Charger interviewed by Amy Goodman 2017). Adam, a professional community organizer with a focus on direct action resisting pipelines, agreed that no one thought it was possible. He described an interaction with an older Native man at a gas station close to the reservation in the summer in which the older man asked him what he was doing and he said he was going to stop the pipeline. The older Native man then replied “That’s not possible. It would take

thousands of you to do that...I would love to see that too but that will never happen”.

Liam said “there’s virtually never a way to know that something is going to catch the public eye in the way that Standing Rock did because it is so rare.”

For many months, the water protectors at the camp went largely unnoticed. Desiree, one of the first people at the camp, explained that Oceti Sakowin was founded in April when there were only about a dozen water protectors there. The camp garnered attention within environmental justice networks, but there was no major news coverage of the camp until Labor Day weekend when Amy Goodman travelled to North Dakota to cover the encampment with *Democracy Now!*. This was the weekend that the private security hired by Energy Transfer Partners set attack dogs on the water protectors at an action. The violent footage of dogs with blood on their mouths after snapping at activists caught the attention of other news networks and the broader public became aware of the movement. The fact that so few people could even imagine what this vision of a frontline encampment would look like prior to it being actualized, demonstrates just how innovative it was. And if not for the land provided by Brave Bull Allard and the vision of prefigurative politics, the camp would not have existed in the way that it did.

By itself, the tactic of occupying a space that activists believe they have a right to is not innovative. Sit ins and occupations is a common tactic employed by a variety of movements across the world. But what made this tactic so innovative at Standing Rock, was the long term community care that was developed there. I will detail this pillar of the movement in the next section.

Prefigurative political community at the camp

Standing Rock provides a compelling case study because unlike most large scale social movements, the movement participants lived together, ate together, and prayed together. In doing so, they attempted to live out the values of the society their movement was striving to achieve. As part of living out their values, the movement sought to cultivate a community based in spiritual practices. There was a sacred fire, the Seven Council Fire, burning from when the camp started in April to December 13th. Each morning started with prayer and smudging at this fire. The structure of the camp was centered around the sacred fire. This demonstrates how important the incorporation of spiritual practices into the culture of the camp and the perceived sustainability of the camp over time.

This spirituality extended beyond prayer and ceremony, but was also integrated into the behavioral norms at the camp. When people entered the camp, they were told that there was no alcohol, drugs or weapons allowed in the camp. The land that the camp was situated on is sacred and therefore must be respected. For similar reasons, there was no photography or videography allowed in the camp. There was one spot in the camp that media and individuals were allowed to take pictures, known as “Facebook Hill”, but there was no photography allowed anywhere else on camp grounds. This demonstrates how respect for sacred land and ceremonies was implemented in the rules and behavioral expectations throughout the camp and this was mandated of all participants. It also

demonstrates the degree of control that movement leaders had over participants. And they enacted this control in an effort to honor sacred land and enforce behavioral norms that were grounded in respect and care.

Another way that the camp embodied prefigurative politics is the range of resources provided to movement participants. The camp provided prepared meals for anyone at the camp that needed it. Jan, a white ally who worked in the kitchen for several weeks, estimated that they were feeding about 1,000 people three times a day, every day, at the main camp. This was no small task in a makeshift kitchen with no running water. But the food was not the only service provided. When I volunteered at the camp, I, along with a group of other volunteers, were tasked with moving the ‘school’ to a larger tent because they had outgrown their previous school tent. The school was full of curricular material for children of all ages, including dozens of activity books, and several old laptops that had been donated. This shows that the camp was not just a place for activists to stay, but rather a place in which community was being cultivated and people were cared for.

Lastly, the camp embodied prefigurative politics by attempting to have the smallest environmental impact possible. Many people from the general public donated single use plastic water bottles for those at the camp to use. After consuming the water, there were collection bins throughout the camp where people would leave the bottles for people to use for insulation for their yurts as they prepared for winter. The bathrooms at the camp were all composting toilets, which saved water and limited waste. The entire

camp was energy independent and many of the permanent structures at the camp had solar panels attached to them to supply the electricity needed for minimal functions. This demonstrates the importance of energy independence and living out a world in which fossil fuels are not necessary.

Tensions that developed as a result of this tactic

In addition to the many benefits of the prefigurative political community that formed at the camp, there were significant challenges that arose from it as some of the defining features of prefigurative politics clashed with innovation. I use the word ‘tension’ because it is not as black and white as pros versus cons. There are both strengths and weaknesses within the characteristics of the camp. And relatedly, something that could be considered a strength to some people at the camp, could be a weakness in the eyes of other participants. The three primary tensions that arose were: cultivating community among thousands of strangers, the complexities of welcoming almost anyone into the camp, and the challenges that arose from implementing a non-hierarchical leadership structure.

Prefigurative politics was beneficial for the movement for the means of building community at the camp. LaDonna Brave Bull Allard, in an interview with Amy Goodman (2016), stated that “I think what’s happening in the camps is healing and empowerment of the people. I see song and dance and sharing and families and children. So much more is happening there than what is — we’re allowed with the press right now.” This

resonated with several of the people that I interviewed as well. The idea that the camp was not just a place to stop a pipeline but also a place to build community, celebrate Indigeneity, and practice spirituality was innovative and cultivated belonging and strength within the camp. Bobbi Jean Three Legs, a young water protector at the camp, described her experience at the camp: “I felt like I belonged there. And I believe that everybody that’s camped out there now feels the same way. And I’m so thankful for them being there, because, without them, this pipeline would have already been built a long time ago” (Bobbi Jean Three Legs interviewed by Amy Goodman 2017). This community was cultivated by living out the values of connection and spirituality.

This community was a necessary component to ensuring that the camp remained virtually all nonviolent. This is especially impressive in the face of professional security who had infiltrated the camp in an attempt to escalate actions from within. Desiree, one of the initial members of the camp, stated that there were over 200 infiltrators at the camp, representing 13 mercenary groups. One example of movement participants remaining nonviolent in the face of infiltration occurred on Thursday, October 27th when a security guard employed by Dakota Access, attempting to infiltrate the camp while wielding a rifle, was peacefully disarmed by water protectors. The security guard, Kyle Thompson, was driving down Highway 1806 when a Standing Rock Sioux tribal member saw an AR-15 in his passenger seat. Water protectors chased down his truck and then pursued him on foot where he was cornered in a pond. Dallas Goldtooth, an organizer with the Indigenous Environmental Network, described the scene as a:

a terrifying moment for a lot of us watching, I mean, to see this man pointing an assault rifle at our water protectors. And I think that—many blessings and gratitude to some of the military veterans within our security from within our Oceti Sakowin camp, who stepped up to negotiate and to de-escalate this man, to really talk to him to make sure that he did not hurt anybody, until the Bureau of Indian Affairs police officers could show up. (Dallas Goldtooth interviewed by Amy Goodman 2016).

In the face of pepper spray, tear gas, bean bag rounds, rubber bullets, and sound cannons called LRADS, this is just one example of a situation that could have become incredibly violent and dangerous but water protectors responded with nonviolent actions. This is due to the fact that the praxis of nonviolence was embedded into the community and lifestyle that the water protectors were immersed in.

On a logistical level, a challenge arose when some participants, particularly white participants, took this welcoming into community as an opportunity to take ownership over the camp operations. Martha, a tar sands resistance organizer who travelled to Standing Rock from Iowa, worked in the kitchen as part of the team preparing food for upwards of 1,000 people three times a day. She was given clear instructions from Native women on how to wash the dishes in the kitchen. They had two buckets, one to rinse the dishes in and the second the bleach rinse them. Martha explained that one day, a white suburban looking woman came into the kitchen and was very concerned about the lack of hygiene in the camp and attempted to overrule the Native women leading the kitchen by demanding that they more properly sanitize the dishes they used. Martha told her that was not possible, showed her the system they used to clean the dishes, and told her that they

were following elder leadership. She explained that she has a “GE dishwasher with a sterilizer button [at home]. I love to sterilize things. But not here, not today.” The woman was insistent and Martha ended up getting so frustrated with this woman, as well as other white allies, for their lack of respect for Native leadership that she left the kitchen and didn’t return for several weeks.

Despite the challenges that arose from holding that many people in the community, it was an empowering characteristic of the movement. The construction of this community is especially impressive considering almost anyone who wanted to participate was welcomed into the camp. This open invitation is what made the tactic so innovative and made it possible to draw thousands of people together at the same time and place to resist DAPL. It is how people power was constructed. However, by welcoming anyone to participate, this created the problem of people coming from the wrong reasons.

Ron, a white Twin Cities based pipeline resistor who travelled to the camp for extended periods of time to help with the camp operations, specifically the provision of firewood, had a similar experience with other white allies who came to the camp. He explained that when he was working to chop wood, these people, white allies who came to the camp for a short amount of time, would stop by for a few minutes and chop a few pieces of wood and then leave. He explains that these people were “there for their own reasons and not in concert...with really the focus of why people were there.” Ron highlighted a problem that served as a common thread throughout my interviews: these

white allies largely depleted limited resources at the camp. He said, as someone who tried to be self sustaining, that they were an “imposition” because “all of them were at the meal tents so they were consuming resources without contributing.” Martha mentioned the term ‘Wasi’chu’ when discussing white people at the camp. She said this is the Lakota word meaning he who grabs the fat is the term used for white people. After doing some research I discovered, while this a common misconception, that actually is not the direct translation of the word. But it does demonstrate her perception of white people in the camp. She goes on to say “that’s what we do, grab the air, water, land, children, and whatever else. We’re not humble. The implications are infinite.”

While accounts of the role and influence that white allies had at the camp, every single person I interviewed discussed the problematic nature of at least some white actors at the camp. While there are no available statistics of the demographics of the camp, anecdotal evidence notes the majority of participants were white and racial tensions bred conflict at the camp. Desiree, summarized the racial tensions well. She explained that the camp drew in a lot of “malignant narcissists” who had come to “save the Indians.” She said that everyday manifestations of white supremacy were rampant at Oceti Sakowin and that the racial dynamics in the United States were replicated at the camp. Adam, nonviolent direct action trainer at the camp, agreed with Desiree and also witnessed these “white tourists romanticizing Native people and the NoDAPL struggle.” Based on the accounts of several people, white “protest tourists”, who only came for a short amount of time, were the main perpetrators of this racial tension and violence. Desiree explained

that many such people were not respectful of the fact that she was permanently living there and this was her home for upwards of seven months, not some resort to spend the weekend. She described an incident where her space was invaded by a young white man who in the middle of the night plugged his RV into her yurt and refused to remove it in the morning. She described this incident as “colonizers and settlers 101”. These racial tensions would have been present regardless of the structure of the movement because white supremacy is so rampant in our society, but they were heightened due to the fact that the movement was living in community with each other and were welcoming everyone into their community, and some took that offer too far.

While the role of these white protest tourists was problematic and harmful to the health of the community at the camp, even more dangerous was the role of infiltration of law enforcement and private security. The most prominent of these mercenary groups is TigerSwan, an international security firm that employed military style counterterrorism tactics. The company first began as a U.S. military and State Department contractor and was employed by Energy Transfer Partners to address the Standing Rock movement in September of 2016. While TigerSwan is a private company, the line between public and private intelligence operations at Standing Rock were blurred and leaked internal reports show that TigerSwan was in close collaboration with police from at least five states.

The extent of this infiltration can be seen in the case of Red Fawn Fallis. Fallis is an Oglala Sioux woman in her late thirties who lived at the camp. During an action, she was being arrested and struggled as they pinned her to the ground and placed handcuffs

on her. During this altercation, three gunshots allegedly went off. The arresting officers claim that they removed a gun from her left hand. The Intercept, an online publication that is self described “adversarial journalism that holds the powerful accountable”, later published a report that revealed that the legal owner of the gun Fallis is alleged to have fired was a paid FBI informant, Heath Harmon. Harmon is a 46 year old member of the Fort Berthold Reservation. Harmon had been participating in daily life at camp for at least two months, and in the weeks prior to Fallis’s arrest, had become her romantic partner. In an interview with agents from the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation, Harmon reported that his work for the FBI included monitoring the Standing Rock camps from the inside. Red Fawn Fallis has been incarcerated since that day in October 2016, and in July of 2018, she was sentenced to 57 months in prison. Heath Harmon was never charged with any crimes.

This demonstrates how embedded private and public law enforcement was in the camp, making it difficult for water protectors to cultivate a community of trust. When I asked Desiree when the surveillance of water protectors started, she said “When Christopher Columbus arrived in 19 - uh - 1492.” She explained that “especially in Native communities, everything we do is monitored by the government. Everything.” This makes cultivating a community of trust very difficult and served as a significant barrier to developing the prefigurative community that leaders strived for.

If the tactic had not been emergent, there may have been more time for movement leaders to be strategic and build consensus around who would be allowed into the camp,

who to turn away, and how to handle white protest tourists and other problematic characters at the camp. It is possible that given time and discussion, the same approach would have been taken. But the participation at the camp escalated so quickly and with so little notice, it was challenging for movement leaders to adequately prepare for these dynamics at the camp.

The final tension that was produced by the innovative community that developed was the struggle to implement a nonhierarchical leadership structure amongst a group of people who had only ever had experience with hierarchical leadership. Liam stated that a primary problem with the camp is that “there wasn’t the structure that allowed the camp as a whole to be like ‘this is what is actually happening today’”. This is a problem that I also observed in the movement to stop Line 3, a proposed tar sands oil pipeline in Minnesota, where organizers aspire to be non-hierarchical and, when not executed properly, this results in mass confusion and miscommunication. Adam explained that this was further complicated at Standing Rock where traditional leadership structures have been undone by 500 years of genocide and colonialism. The Standing Rock movement attempted to be prefigurative by being non-hierarchical, but this lack of a clear leadership structure resulted in a lack of control over movement participants that made it challenging to execute their goals.

It is a common misunderstanding that non-hierarchical leadership is the same as no leadership structure. While that is not inherently true, it is challenging to execute when leadership structures are not well defined. Liam argues that, while he was not fully aware

of all the structures at play, “there was no powerful central coordinating committee or group that was able to call actions or retract them. It was kind of an organic blob with some weak leadership. And that meant that it was often confusing how much direct action we were going to do.” When asked about coordination at the camps, LaDonna Brave Bull Allard, in an interview with Amy Goodman (2016), explained that:

At Oceti Sakowin camp, they are trying to establish a base. But when you have many different nations -- I think we're 200-and-some nations now -- plus, all the other people that have come in. For the tribal nations, I think there's just something in our head that makes people go to each of their areas, and there is this traditional law, old law, that people are following.

Allard also highlights another struggle with developing a leadership structure in that over 200 tribes were represented at the camp. Each of these tribes practice a unique form of leadership that do not necessarily coordinate with the other structures. In addition to the thousands of white people at the camp, most of whom had never experienced non-hierarchical leadership. A lot of white allies considered Dave Archambault II to be the leader of the occupation because he was the chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. While Archambault did in fact play a leadership role in the movement, to consider him the sole, or even primary, leader is a very colonized governmental concept of power and it is not true that he always held the highest position of power among movement participants, despite holding the highest position in the tribal government.

Despite lacking a clear definition of who obtained what degree of leadership, movement organizers were still able to exert some degree of control over the majority of

participants. This took shape in many ways, but predominantly by providing training and orientation for everyone present at the camp. It was spread across social media to, prior to traveling to the camp, to familiarize yourself with the Standing Rock Syllabus which was a document that provided the history and context for the encampment. However, there was no way to ensure that those traveling to the camp actually did explore this resource seeing as there was no test. In my own experience, upon arrival, before entering the camp, everyone in the vehicle I was driving was given basic camp instructions from two men who were serving as security at the front entrance. We were told not to bring any alcohol or drugs onto the camp, no weapons of any kind were allowed, we were asked not to swear, along with several other behavioral stipulations. If a participant planned to participate in any direct actions, they were required to attend an orientation and training that took place everyday at 2pm. If you planned to eat the camp food, it was made clear that elders were to be served first. It was communicated that these rules were created and enforced in an effort to keep the camp respectful and nonviolent.

Desiree relayed an experience she had in which a participant did not follow the directions that the camp required of everyone. The camp had additional training for all press because there had been conflicts between non-Native media and water protectors. It was a very short cultural orientation for new members of the press that was meant to give them a “crash course” of how to be present at the camp. Desiree was about to begin leading one of these trainings when a nineteen year old, wealthy white woman refused to participate because she claimed to have already talked to another Native person and

donated a great deal of goods to the camp. Desiree made it clear that if she wanted to remain in the camp. She had to do the training. Otherwise she would be removed from the camp. She agreed to stay in the training but was very disrespectful and was on her phone, blatantly ignoring Desiree. After a few minutes, an editor from *The New York Times* interrupted Desiree and told her that she was not comfortable with the young woman being in the camp because she was clearly not listening and taking the training seriously. Desiree agreed and asked security to escort the woman out of the camp. This demonstrates how control over the space of the camp can be used to execute a degree of control over movement participants who did not follow the rules. It also shows that the enforcement of the rules were diffused. While Desiree was the one who initially informed the woman of the rules and the consequences for breaking them, it was another journalist reporting on the camp that supported the enforcement of this rule breaking.

Despite the ability of movement leaders to exert a degree of control over participants, the lack of a well defined leadership structure had challenging implications for the organization of the camp. Standing Rock was not immune to the conflicts between leaders that often confront social movements and without a clear leadership structure, there was no infrastructure or process to resolve this conflict. A common challenge for white allies who came to the camp is that they came with the steadfast belief that they must follow Native leadership. But then upon arrival, they discovered that Native people are not monolithic and struggled to know who to listen to and when. Liam, a professional pipeline resistance organizer in the Twin Cities said that “for practically everything there

would be some elder that would agree with you.” These conflicts manifested in a variety of ways, but the most salient in this case study is the controversy over what tactics should be employed and to what degree of escalation.

This conflict is well represented in the action that occurred on the weekend of October 27th that led to the arrest of over 130 people and several vehicles and a road block being set on fire by water protectors. Karen, a white ally who travelled to Standing Rock from Minneapolis with her two teenage daughters, described her experience which demonstrates the unclear leadership structure of the movement and the consequence of this on direct actions. The three of them did not attend the direct action training provided at the camp because they did not intend on participating in any actions. They had come to drop off donations and assist with camp operations. However, at around five in the morning on the 27th, they were awoken by a voice over a loudspeaker calling all participants to move to the frontlines for an action. Karen described hesitating, but then the voice on the loudspeaker said “this is why you’ve come” and so she and her daughters decided to join. She said in hindsight that they should have gone to the training, or not gone to the action. “But the loudspeaker did not say ‘if you were trained, come’. It just said ‘come’”, and they were not clear on what they were coming to.

They joined the group of people gathering at the entrance of the camp, but they did not know where they were going. Karen explained that she had been watching live streams of previous actions on Facebook, so she assumed that they would be going on a march of kinds. A man in the front of the crowd with a megaphone explained that there

were some people locked down to equipment at a construction site, and they would be going to show them support. That was the only information Karen received from movement leadership. She explained that this was after the incident with the attack dogs, but before the mass arrests, so she understood things were escalating, but was not concerned that she or her daughters would be at risk of arrest. The crowd she was in met with another group from one of the other camps on their way to the construction site. Before entering the construction site, the large group had a prayer ceremony on the side of the road.

Karen said that it was at this point that it got kind of confusing. “There were two factions of people and the leadership wasn’t clear. We were on the construction site. And there were some Indigenous people who said ‘no you can’t go on that land because you’re walking on desecrated land’. And there was quite a rift on whether people should stay or go. And definitely some people stayed back.” She heard a loud discussion happening nearby where one elder was yelling at the crowd and telling them to get off the land. But then there were other Indigenous leaders who said that they must go. Karen explained that as a non-Native ally that was unaffiliated with an organization, she “floundered” and was not able to make an informed decision on which leader had more credibility, because they were caught up in the midst of an action and she did not understand the hierarchy of who she should be listening to in that situation. She turned to a Native man next to her in the crowd that she had been talking to earlier, and asked what she should do. He shrugged and said “you have to do what's right for you, but there are

Indigenous people over there as well and that's where I'm going." They did continue onwards and were met with militarized police and narrowly missed arrest.

When describing this experience, Karen wanted to make very clear to me that she was not coerced into participating in this action. She knew that they were asking her to participate in a direct action, and from the extensive coverage on social media that she had seen, she had an idea of what to expect. However, it was clear from her recounting of this action, that there was not a unified strategy among leaders. Karen explained that she was okay participating in this action with limited information, but when she heard the elder who said it was the wrong thing to do she felt "uncomfortable" and "confused". She did not have the context necessary to make an informed decision based on the movement's leadership structure and so in the moment she had to make a decision based on the number of people physically moving to each side, and the insight of the man she was standing next to.

Following this march, a small group of water protectors set several vehicles and plywood that were serving as roadblocks ablaze. While the exact details of this event vary, it seems largely agreed upon that those who did this were young Native water protectors and were acting in retaliation for the actions of law enforcement earlier that day. Lily, a student who was visiting the camp that weekend over a school break, witnessed the debate that followed this action between a Native elder, referred to Uncle Robert, and a young activist who did not claim responsibility for starting the fires, but was in support of the action. She explained that this conversation happened around the

Sacred Fire for about four hours and anyone was welcome to listen. The younger activist, according to Lily, appeared to be an anarchist and was not openly affiliated with any of the tribes. Uncle Robert was scolding him for the actions that were taken and stated that water protectors like him were giving the movement a bad name. In the notes Lily took immediately following this conversation, she wrote that Uncle Robert said to the young man: “You’re not from here, so you have no right to criticize. Our children are traumatized - you have no idea, you could never imagine what these kids have been through. They know people who have been killed. I’m not happy about what happened today.”

Another moment that exemplifies this conflict is when the tribal chairman, Dave Archambault, asked everyone to leave the camp in early December after the Obama administration called for a halt to construction until the Army Corp of Engineers complete an environmental review. A close colleague of Archambault’s explained to me that the camp was a huge financial strain on the tribe and the arrests were becoming unproductive because they were no longer targeting illegal action being completed by Energy Transfer Partners, but were instead risking arrest for the sake of being arrested. Additionally, it appears as though Archambault also genuinely thought construction would stop following this order. In an interview with Amy Goodman (2016), Archambault said:

There’s really no need for them to stay...it’s OK now. And I understand their mistrust for the government and for this company, because, from the beginning, nothing was held to. You know, we asked the company to

voluntarily stop, but they wouldn't stop. So, I understand how they feel, but it's OK. And the company did not get the easement, and so that's going to be a process, a long, drawn-out process. Even if the company tries to reverse this and even if the president tries to reverse it, it's not going to happen this winter, so it's OK for them to go home."

Archambault's call to end the camp was controversial to say the least. Many water protectors who were at the camp chose to defy his call and remain at the camp until the Bureau of Indian Affairs cleared the camp in early February. Chase Iron Eyes, a water protector who was raised at Standing Rock, was among the water protectors who stayed.

In an interview with Amy Goodman (2016), explained that:

There are probably a thousand people still here who are committed to staying until the pipeline is dead. They're committed to staying to protect our treaty rights and to create a new existence for our people. They're committed even to protecting American constitutional, civil and human rights. And so we approached the elders, and they told us how to conduct ourselves and to build a new fire. It's all young people who came out.

Liam explained that he disagreed with Dave Archambault's call for people to leave because "it was really clear to many people coming from an action background that having that mass of people on the ground was the only place that their power was coming from." In addition to the age differences highlighted in the quote from Chase Iron Eyes, there was also a gender dynamic present in this decision. Jasilyn Charger, in an interview with Amy Goodman (2017) said:

Just because a chairman, a male figure, told us all to leave doesn't mean we're going to leave. Us, as women, we feel that it is our duty to our children and to our children's children to really fight for them. And we want to tell them, as women, we stand up there, even if the men back

down. We are going to keep standing up there. It's because we have no fear. When it comes between a mother and her child, nothing can stand in her way."

When I asked Adam about where the conflict of whether or not to continue escalated actions comes from, he said that "the big counterpoint to the direct action crowd was, as you said mostly older, but it was mostly like the "we just need to pray to stop the pipeline" [crowd] and those were very powerful voices as well." This perspective is exemplified in the quote from Dave Archambault II:

They have to pray. They have to continue to pray. And they have to start taking the lessons that were given at this camp. What did we learn at this camp? That prayer and peace is what's going to help us be successful. It's not the violent acts by people that build awareness. It's the moral high ground that everybody needs to take." (Dave Archambault II interviewed by Amy Goodman 2016).

Adam then described this second group of people "at the direct action camp who say "prayer is action, action is prayer". It's like yes we pray to stop the pipeline and we will pray in front of the bulldozer." He explained that several of his friends who were proponents for direct action were very angry and frustrated with the internal conflicts that they felt were impeding them from stopping the pipeline.

This conflict between movement leaders at Standing Rock fueled tensions within the camp among Native water protectors. This created confusion for movement participants as to whose direction they should follow and there was not a clear hierarchy in place to determine this. Desiree explained that these conflicts did not detract from the movement as a whole because it was so much bigger than disputes between individuals.

But divisions within camp did lead to frustration of many water protectors. This brings up a larger question of who the movement leaders were and how they exercised this leadership over movement participants. This is particularly challenging in the case of a movement such as NoDAPL because you have so many coalition and movement partners involved. Wang and Soule (2016) found that protests in which there is a convergence of movements lead to increased tactical innovation. Having these different actors present also leads to different parties interpreting tactics in different ways. This lack of uniformity across the movement was so powerful because it sparked innovation, but also served as a challenge when competing ideas arose.

Conclusions

This case study of Standing Rock demonstrates a situation when limited resources and prefigurative politics served as a catalyst for tactical innovation. This innovation can be both a movement's greatest strength and as well as cultivate tensions within the movement. Did the encampment stop DAPL from being built? No. However, that is not to say that there were not other aspects of the movement that can be considered successful. Standing Rock redefined what pipeline resistance work looks like around the world. Since the encampment ended, there has been legislation proposed in 18 states that would criminalize protests that disrupt the construction and operation of pipelines (Cagle 2019). Seven of these states have passed the laws that make protesting, or even just planning protests, of pipelines and other "critical infrastructure" a felony.

This community that developed at Oceti Sakowin had profound implications on the legacy of the Standing Rock movement after the camps were raided and the masses of water protectors left. When reflecting on the legacy of the camp, Desiree said that Standing Rock “sent sparks flying across the environmental justice movement, globally”. Nick Estes and Jaskiran Dhillon explained that “no one could have predicted the movement would spread like wildfire across Turtle Island and the world, moving millions to rise up, speak out, and take action. That’s how revolutionary moments, and the movements within those moments come about.” (Estes and Dhillon 2019: 1). Karen said that the actions taken at Standing Rock were “effective [in] that it mobilized a global awareness of what was going on....Even though they didn’t stop a pipeline, man, they were able to build a network [of activists].” Liam and Adam both stated that the pipeline resistance work that they do today would look very different if not for Standing Rock. Especially being in Minnesota, a lot of people traveled to Standing Rock and then came back and learned about Line 3 so wanted to get involved in that. Standing Rock was how I, personally, first heard about Line 3 and met people who told me how to get involved in the pipeline resistance movement in Minnesota. This may not have been the case if their experience at the camp had not been so powerful which demonstrates how prefigurative politics can engage people in long term movement involvement.

Standing Rock is still recent, as it happened just three years ago. Therefore, there needs to be more extensive research done on the topic. This paper would be complemented with a quantitative study of camp participants, because it only includes the

voices of fifteen people when there were thousands that participated. Further studies on infiltration in the camp is especially important because this type of police repression has severe implications on our democracy and the right to protest.

The characteristic of the camp that defined intra-movement dynamics are prefigurative politics, or the goal to live out the values that a movement is advocating for. This prefigurative political community, combined with the limited resources available to the movement, resulted in tactical innovation. This expands on tactical innovation scholarship which does not emphasize resource availability as a significant catalyst for innovation. Using the resources available to them, while enacting prefigurative politics, resulted in a large scale, long term, encampment. This research demonstrates how complicated innovation can be because organizing a resistance movement to the scale that the Standing Rock encampment grew to requires extensive planning and organization. But how can a movement plan for something previously no one thought was possible?

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