

*The Deconsolidation and
Reconsolidation of
Venezuelan Democracy
(1958-2002)*

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A.C. Clark, the anonymous author of the Book, *The Revolutionary has no clothes*, writes, By and large, [analysts who analyze the Bolivarian Revolution] ignore Venezuelan history... In contrast, this book draws from a variety of sources in an effort to look at Venezuelan history objectively. A passing acquaintance with this history is helpful for understanding the contemporary Venezuelan reality and grasping how it was possible for ... [Venezuela to develop as it has] ¹

That it is necessary to understand Venezuela's past in order to understand its present, is quite the truism, and Clark lays it down in his opening pages, this paper will follow that very same road. Although, Clark's conclusions may be less useful, for my argument takes a different path ². This paper will address the general theme of the "deconsolidation of Democracy" by examining both the deconsolidation (1945-1988) and reconsolidation of democracy (1989-2002) in Venezuela. What may be controversial, and not just to Clark ³, are my claims about both the aforementioned periodizations of democracy in Venezuela, for what is described in terms as starkly as the "rise of political polarization, declining political trust, populism and support for authoritarian leaders ..." in the 2017 Canadian Political Science's conference theme of "deconsolidation of democracy" ⁴, describes the decades of Venezuela prior to the events of the Caracazo 1989, rather than the decades following, even if contemporary events (the street battles of 2017) would seem to describe something else. In brief, a different reconstruction of the reconsolidation of Venezuela's democracy may be possible ⁵. Nevertheless, the point is the years of 1958-1998 were not a safetime in Venezuela either as governments could be described in many ways as an "anti-citizen" liberal democracy and as numbers of citizens were continuously killed by their own governments especially from the years 1958 onward, rather than the later Chavista government ⁶. This deconsolidation, as part of the foundation of the nominally "liberal" exceptionalism of Venezuela, was a period which fully ended with Chávez's election in 1998. However, starting in February 1989, something had already changed for Venezuela. This paper will argue that Venezuela in 1989 experienced a reconsolidation of democracy that continues to this day against the "nominal exceptionalism" of 1935-1989, although Venezuelan governments stayed anti-citizen for more or less the ten years following 1989, but one thing consistent for Venezuelan governments since February 1989 is being faced with the unique situation of not functioning without the direct intervention of the Venezuelan people in the everyday realm of politics. This new exceptionalism" from 1989-2017 was the direct insertion of new forms of mass politics in the political sphere, endogenously launched themselves and lodging themselves in into the political sphere, Venezuela's masses started something relatively unknown. It can be truly said that the thus far marker of Bolivarian governments since 1998 may be the relatively peaceful transitions of different periods of the state in the Bolivarian revolution. In fact, it may be possible that Chávez's years in power may have strengthened feelings of popular democracy throughout Venezuela, by buying time for new forms of democratic institutionalism to grow. It is this aspect of the Bolivarian revolution that is under examination today, which is why for now, I would prefer to stop at the year 2002, although, for sake of comparison, later development of mass political institutions will be

¹ (Clark, A. C, 2009, viii).

² Clark decries the "idiotic left" who adore Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, see, e.g. ; (Clark, A. C, 2009, 25-26). I hope my argument is sufficiently independent of any adoration I may have for Chávez. That is, this is not about Chávez, nor is it about Nicolás Maduro, the new "horror" of the revolution, although, I hope that Maduro has not ended the revolution, and I quite suspect he has not. Oh, and Chávez was the best damn public speaker I have ever seen, patient and slow, educative, interesting and informative. In that sense, I too would hope to somewhat maintain the reader's interest, as Chávez certainly could.

³ That is, I think given the tenor of Clark's argument, he is not going to agree with my usage of the musical scale. Clark and my politics do not align, in fact, many may not agree with me, but that still does not make my analysis wrong. And if my anonymous homey, Clark, cannot hang, there is good reason how and why we differ.

⁴ (CPSA, 2017).

⁵ I.e., as the forty-fifth President of the United States, Donald J. Trump likes to say, "Alternate facts! Sad!" In that vein, as Frances Fukuyama's introduction to Huntington's new edition of *Political Order in Changing Societies* rightly states "Today in Andean countries like Venezuela... new social actors (particularly ...groups left out of the formal political system) are undermining weak institutions and leaving chaos in their wake," which is not less breathtaking than Huntington's own claims.

⁶ And this remains true in 2017, while some of the deaths are attributable to either the state or revolutionary actors, most of the violence, including the deadly violence has tended to be the result of the opposition. Which is not to mention the sometimes weekly occurrence of murders of revolutionary leaders, especially over the last decade, and unless rogue state actors do the killings, the deaths are not attributable to the state.

Section 1) Reconsolidating Democracy against Polyarchy

I think it might be appropriate to start with attempting to flatten a term that is completely impossible to flatten, an attempt that may beg disbelief, but one which is necessary in order to grasp the full argument of this paper ⁸. First of all, above all, is Aristotle's clear definitions of not just democracy but also his always clear method of science as an example of his incisive discourse on politics, Aristotle's analysis remains, the origin of too much political thought. In examining Aristotle's definition, I will also briefly bring out Huntington's definition of democracy, before settling in on defining pluralist "democracy," before jettisoning the usage of pluralism, to maintain a distinctive definition and "threshold" ⁹ of democracy.

Aristotle defines democracy in various ways, but one of the more interesting ways that he does so, takes place in the broader context of asking a very important question about the political community, what specifies democracy from other forms of political communities ¹⁰? At first he asks if democracy is simply the condition of majority rules, ¹¹. But then he shifts gear, for what is specific about the democratic form of political citizenship is that the labouring peasant unusually has political control, although, he firstly and firmly insists that the "best state will not make the mechanic a citizen" ¹². This is important, as Ellen Wood has pointed out, Athens contemporaneous to Aristotle's life was quite consciously democratic in the sense that the political community was unusually predicated on a citizenship that was a labouring body ¹³. Secondly, the point about democracy is that it is the political community controlled by the poor, not simply even accessed by the poor, but controlled by the poor. As Aristotle states

...what really differentiates oligarchy and democracy is wealth or the lack of it. It inevitably follows that where men ¹⁴ rule because of the possession of wealth, whether their number be large or small, that is oligarchy, and

⁷ This paper, in no small part is due to my research work in both my masters and in my doctorate. My major research contributions have both in some ways dealt with Venezuela. Consequently, portions of this paper have been extracted from my previous research, as part of my Master's Research Paper on the Bolivarian Revolution, but this paper and presentation on June 1, 2017 is drawing on work from my doctoral studies as well. My dissertation's main case study is of the Bolivarian Revolution of Venezuela (1989-Present day), but the point of my dissertation is to work out what a "social revolution" is. The dissertation first isolates the social phenomena of revolution and then further examines both the state and revolution, before fully working on the actual definition of social revolution. In this current paper, the overall mustering of evidence can be taken that certain indicators of a threshold of social revolution has been achieved since 1989 and to be precise, it is the very social phenomena that I am identifying in this present paper that help push my analysis of "social revolutions" in my dissertation. Please note that this paper remains in an early draft and that profound changes still may take place, consequently do not cite until the final draft is uploaded.

⁸ Moreover, this paper is an attempt to combine phenomenological reduction with a historically materialist reconstruction of the social phenomena being studied. (For phenomenological reduction see the work of Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, or Frantz Fanon. As such, please refer to; (Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1965); (Beauvoir, Simone de, 1976); (Fanon, Frantz, 2007); (Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1965); (Beauvoir, Simone de, 2010); (Fanon, Frantz, 2004); (Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1992) (Marx, Karl, 1977). This paper also thus is in the tradition of both EP Thompson and Ellen Meiksins Wood, in following the instincts of disentangling mass politics from the studies of the elite, and the implications of both, especially through Wood's renewal of historical materialism based on Thompson's profound and precise historical method. For example, see (Wood, Ellen Meiksins, 1995); (Thompson, E. P., 1993); (Wood, Ellen Meiksins, 2002); (Wood, Neal, 1978); (Thompson, E. P., 1978a) (Marx, Karl, 1977).

⁹ For "thresholds," please see Robert Dahl's work on Polyarchy, (Dahl, Robert, 1989); (Dahl, Robert, 1971). The discussion on page 6 is key: (Dahl, Robert, 1989, 6);

In addition, if democracy is both an ideal and an attainable actuality, how are we to judge when an actual regime is sufficiently proximate to the ideal that we can properly regard it as a democracy? The problem is not merely a trivial one of word usage, though it is also that. It is a problem of deciding on a reasonable threshold. In short, how can we reasonably judge that a regime, system, or process is democratic, as against, say, oligarchic, aristocratic, meritocratic, or whatever?

¹⁰ See for example; (Aristotle, 1992, 1279b4). Huntington correctly points out Aristotle's first definition of Democracy, as the practical of social reproduction, and also goes further to stress that the need for social reproduction is a "primary" need, the point being this need is true of all "social phenomena"; (Huntington, Samuel P, 2006 19 & 25). For other ways that Aristotle defines democracy, see, e.g.; (Aristotle, 1992).

¹¹ See; (Aristotle, 1992, 1279b16).

¹² (Aristotle, 1992, 1277b33). Huntington does not explicitly state this point, Robert Dahl misses it altogether in his usage of Aristotle.

¹³ See for example, (Wood, Ellen Meiksins, 2008); (Wood, Neal, 1978); (Wolin, Sheldon, 1996a); Especially, (Wood, Ellen Meiksins, 1995); McNally's intervention, his presentation on "Ellen Wood and the labouring citizen" (May, 11, 2007), *Historical Materialism 2016*, Toronto) further draws out some of the connections. For Aristotle's critique of the labouring citizen, please see; (Aristotle, 1992, 1277a33, 1277b33-1278a40, 1319b1). In comparison, until Locke specifies the basic expectation of historic capitalism that of the "improving land owner" of England of the mid-seventeenth century, the ideal of Aristocrats were to be Aristotle's "leisure class." This "leisure class" is of course, the baseline for why the rich and oligarchs are more easily part of the political community, for Aristotle, than "labourers" who have no proper time for leisure. However, "in a nutshell" Locke's "improving landowner" would have been an anathema to Aristotle and for all of human history up to that point! See (Wood, Ellen Meiksins, 1995).

¹⁴ Aristotle is using the male, he is typical of those who are anti-democratic, he tends to also be misogynist.

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when the poor rule, that is democracy. But, as we have said, in actual fact the former are few, the latter many

¹⁵ This would seem to not only create quite a high threshold for any specific political community to be a democracy, but would also quite clearly specify what is a democracy, and how it would be different from most other political communities ¹⁶. A key definition, following from Aristotle's is Wolin's 1996 distinction between "Constitutional democracy" and "Democratic constitutionalism," as he says, "alternatives rather than similars" ¹⁷.

In contrast to Aristotle, Huntington's view on democracy would seem to assume that the baseline of a community that constitutes itself through the "will of the people" is the constitution of democracy, ¹⁸. Moreover, what is key for Huntington is that, in some ways like Aristotle, is searching for some form of "political order," Huntington, the modern, Aristotle the Greek ¹⁹. Huntington, indicates that by the very nature of "political order" it is not possible to achieve "political order," but despite this juxtaposition he will attempt to achieve order: "My effort here is to probe the conditions under which societies undergoing rapid and disruptive change may in one measure realize this goal [of political order]" The normal "political order" is therefore "filled with violence, instability, and disorder" ²⁰. Alternatively, as Huntington is forced to admit, it is in the very nature of "political order" to be predicated on the "chaos" with which it is filled, and thus from that perspective, searching for order actually makes sense, and why political thought seems to be clear in many different eras and cultures of human existence, relations of ruling must always be naturalized in one way or another. So maybe the point is that some form of "political order" ²¹ does obtain in communities, but the question has to be asked to who does the "political order" accrue?

Political community in a complex society thus depends upon the strength of the political organizations and procedures in the society. That strength, in turn, depends upon the scope of support for the organizations and procedures and their level of institutionalization. Scope refers simply to the extent to which the political organizations and procedures encompass activity in the society. If only a small upper-class group belongs to political organizations and behaves in terms of a set of procedures, the scope is limited. If, on the other hand, a large segment of the population is politically organized and follows the political procedures, the scope is broad. Institutions are stable, valued, recurring patterns of behaviour. Organizations and procedures vary in their degree of institutionalization ²².

¹⁵ (Aristotle, 1992, 1279b26).

¹⁶ See Especially,; (Aristotle, 1992, 1319b27); But also,; (Aristotle, 1992, 1278a13, 1279b16, 1281a11, 1291b30-1292a31, 1313b32).

¹⁷ For Wolin, See below. (Wolin, Sheldon, 1996b, 39). (Huntington, Samuel P, 2006).

¹⁸ Cf.; (Huntington, Samuel P, 2006 27). This paragraph liberally draws on my first chapter for my dissertation.

¹⁹ (Huntington, Samuel P, 2006 19); Huntington, is following Aristotle's push for polity, e.g.; (Aristotle, 1992, 1294a9). Does "will of the people" meet Aristotle's threshold of democracy (i.e., control by the poor)? I would think not necessarily. Pluralists may dispute my claims.

²⁰ (Huntington, Samuel P, 2006 xix).

²¹ A quick word on the definition of the state, especially in light of the concept of "political Order:"

Although, I will not be examining the state qua state in this paper, it might be necessary to simply show the pathway of thought. The state is, as described by historical materialist methods, both the crystallization of social struggles into an institution and the institutional arena of these social struggles, i.e., such that it is the "institution of institutions." Consequently, the baseline of Weber, remains true as well: the state is "legitimacy of force", See; (Weber, Max, 1978c, 39); but Weber remains too caught up in his liberal conservatism to follow up and lapses in pluralist fantasies about the state (Weber, Max, 1978c, 37-38; Weber, Max, 1978a, 26, 101, 110, 202). Like Huntington too, who >>> In regards to the state, even true pluralism goes too far, and there is a huge difference between Marx's understanding of the state, someone like Aristotle's definition of a state, and liberals like Mills or Locke. Marx, from a young age saw that with the state, insofar, as democracy remains a practice within state institutions, democracy will fail to achieve its full potential, especially in regards to the fact that a state is always predicated on force relations. In following, Wood's critique of pluralism, especially in light of pluralist claims to "democracy," the point would always be to "wither away the state" at its core. Nevertheless, in regards to analyzing an advanced capitalist state, like Venezuela's, the point would not be to focus on one faction of the state over another, especially during the middle to late twentieth century, i.e., specifically 192 through 1989, but rather to recognize that after 1958, the Venezuelan state settled its elite factional fighting, something that was attempted in 1945 through 1948, but was unsuccessful at the time. But by 1958, the elites were channeled into successful political parties that in order to rule gave up elite factionalization in society for "smooth ruling." Although, what is true too is that as Venezuela is a capitalist state, the conquering of state power remains slippery, as Miliband points out in even reform moments, the state is inherently conservative, thus, the conservative and backward nature of the Venezuelan state at the simultaneous moment that its nature has been forced to become revolutionary see; (Miliband, Ralph, 1969). That is, even where the revolutionary impulse is strong, the conservative nature of the state qua state may make for counter-revolution, this feature of the capitalist state cannot be overemphasized in reading the story of Venezuela. The Bolivarian Revolution is not perfect, a big reason for that is the very nature of taking state power, which does not forestall the need. Nor is my argument that Maduro and certainly not Chávez, are the cause of the problems in the state, rather it is the nature of the state to cause problems, however, what is true too in the light of an ongoing revolution since 1989, the state, especially since Chávez has also been ruptured by some of the emergence of dual power institutions outside of the state. This is not to mention the paramilitaries, Colombian or otherwise, operating inside portions of the "failed" state structures that have broken open due to the revolutionary nature of the transformations happening in Venezuela. The precise nature of the state, as evidenced by nuanced, critical and including a various type of reader, readings include; ; These readings help form a key counterpoint to the mass history being attempted here.

²² (Huntington, Samuel P, 2006 12).

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While certainly appearing to hold the masses in consideration, the long game is as Aristotle plays it, aim for the middle to maintain (or create) the control of the rich ²³. Huntington to that end uses the US and its completely bastardized system of polyarchy as the very definition of democracy ²⁴, a “constitutional democracy” ²⁵, modernized and totally plural ²⁶. However, what remains clear and so very useful in Huntington is the idea itself of Political order, and a key is whatever has been going on in Venezuela has been a lack of political order, as shall be seen. Before ending this brief section, it is however necessary to finish by discussing pluralism.

On the other hand, traditional pluralism as read, for example by Dahl, who is quite perceptive as he begins by differentiating democracy from plurality. Dahl too goes back to Aristotle, but the slight misreading of Aristotle tendency highlighted above, prevents his understanding. The misreading is, as stated, a reading of Aristotle that misses the political implication of the specificity of the political community of the poor as a distinctive form of political community. In contrast, for Dahl, democracy is only comprised of the “people, and from the beginning Dahl regards democracy as “self-governance” of the “many” ²⁷. The “people,” while technically the real definition from the Greek just misses the political connotation that democracy actually had, rather we have faded into a form of pluralistic feeling already. That is, Aristotle’s point was that it was self-governance of the labouring citizen, the poor, and Dahl misses the forest for the trees, the people becomes rich and poor for Dahl, but not for Aristotle. The political problem of democracy itself is the very political displacement of political communities from the elites of society to the political community of the poor.

But by defining pluralism as separate from democracy, Dahl correctly describes that even his own (lower) threshold of “democracy” (self-governance) would truly be hard to perform in modern era, and here his analysis is truly helpful, for if the United States, not to mention Canada --for example ²⁸, cannot truly be considered “democratic” in the root sense of his meaning, what are they? Dahl responds: “Polyarchy is a political order distinguished at the most general level by two broad characteristics: Citizenship is extended to a relatively high proportion of adults, and the rights of citizenship include the opportunity to oppose and vote out the highest officials in the government” ²⁹. Here Dahl, performs a great service, he answers, for if Canada does not even meet the threshold of how Dahl defines a democracy, it is a “modern” “polyarchy:” a pluralist political community. IN many ways, we can read a Venezuela of the twentieth century as first shaping and then refining a polyarchic form, co-alignment with the rise of the late development finance capitalism of oil development. To specify: that is until 1989. Following 1989, Venezuela may have started to cross the threshold of democracy as defined above, and thus we can discuss a “reconsolidation of democracy,” away from “declining political trust, [right-wing] populism and support for authoritarian leaders” ³⁰ towards “rising political trust,” and substantially less support for authoritarian leaders then one may assume, especially given claims for either the double authoritarianism of Chávez and Maduro, or the singular in Maduro in 2017 Venezuela. Nevertheless, the tendency in pluralism itself towards authoritarianism, recognized quite masterfully by Poulantzas should be clearly noted ³¹.

²³ I.e., as Aristotle, explicitly puts it the “small property owners” ARISTOTLE but truthfully, Aristotle’s game, towards aristocrats ends up with the rich, for ‘better the rich than the poor’ ARISTOTLE the argument is that “small property owners” assumes property (and also, accordingly ‘ a few ‘big’ property owners as well). also see,; (Huntington, Samuel P, 2006 19).

²⁴ (Huntington, Samuel P, 2006 81, 135).

²⁵ (Huntington, Samuel P, 2006 138).

²⁶ (Huntington, Samuel P, 2006 38, 133, 142).

²⁷ (Dahl, Robert, 1989, 3). Which for Aristotle, misses the threshold of democracy, as he asks, ‘what if the poor were a minority and the rich a majority,’ he himself first answers ‘then if the majority held control and it were called a ‘democracy,’ and if the poor, a minority held control it would be called an ‘oligarchy,’ Aristotle then states “it looks like therefore as if there were something wrong with our way of defining constitutions;” (Aristotle, 1992, b16). Aristotle further clarifies, as in the quote on the page above. The poor may be the many, or the poor may be the few, “self-governance of the many,” maybe the root of democracy, or it might be a form of oligarchy, depending if the poor are themselves in control.

²⁸ (Dahl, Robert, 1989, 19).

²⁹ (Dahl, Robert, 1989, 220).

³⁰ (CPSA, 2017).

³¹ (Poulantzas, Nicos Ar, 1978b, 203-250). This was not a new trend in pluralism, Poulantzas’ point was simply that following the 1973 oil shock and coup in Chile, an authoritarian twinge was incorporated as part of neoliberal (re)structuring that followed in states across Europe, the Americas, and the rest of

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This is not the only problem that pluralism constitutes, for as Wood (1995) shows, pluralism is a contemporary justification of continuing forms of oppression, for by looking at competing claims on human existence as if 'all are equal' means that one is equating bosses and workers, as if they held the same level of control in the political community (at work, and in society at large).³² Pluralism fails in attempting to describe itself as ironing out the problem of bosses and workers, when it thus presupposes the existence of both. Pluralism makes no attempt to end the existence of bosses, it simply and quite non-cogently assumes similar access to "a good life" for both the boss and workers³³.

In summation, we will end this section on Wolin's (1996b) difference in democratic constitutions. On the one hand, "the selective addition of democratic elements to a constitution that previously was not democratic and, despite the addition, remains such..." is the condition of "Constitutional democracy"³⁴. But on the other hand, for democratic constitutionalism, see ;³⁵ "...[Wolin] propose[s] accepting the familiar charges that democracy is inherently unstable, inclined toward anarchy, and identified with revolution and using these traits as the basis for a different, aconstitutional conception of democracy;". Wolin concludes with describing his proposal to read "democratic constitutionalism" as

.....a situation in which democratization has dictated the form of constitution...the domination of democracy over constitution: that has been, historically and contemporaneously, the view of critics of democracy. In the words of Apollodorus, 'The Athenian demos has supreme authority over all things in the polis and it is in its power to do whatever it wishes'...[Wolin] propos[es] a theory in which democratic constitutionalism is representative of a moment rather than a teleologically completed form.

As such, one must continue to differentiate the different processes and institutions at the root of contrasting democracy and pluralism, one of the key differences is of the form of constitutionalism at work³⁶. For another reflection on this difference, Finley points out a key component of the democracy in Athens, interestingly enough his highlight is of the specific discussion towards invasion and the general Athenian Imperialism, it is an unfortunate example, but it remains quite instructive:

It would be easy to preach about the irrationality of crowd behaviour at an open-air mass meeting, swayed by demagogic orators, chauvinistic patriotism and so on. But it would be a mistake to overlook that the vote in the Assembly to invade Sicily had been preceded by a period of intense discussion, in the shops and taverns, in the town square, at the dinner tables discussion among the same men who finally came together on the Pnyx for the formal debate and vote. There could not have been a man sitting in the Assembly that day who did not know personally, and often intimately, a considerable number of his fellow-voters, his fellow-members of the Assembly, including perhaps some of the speakers in the debate.³⁷

the world. Luxemburg's "socialism or barbarism" given another horrid historical twist. Venezuela's development from 1973 through 1983 and then 1989 was not that different from its development earlier in the century, however the aberration of 1989 did not end the authoritarianism of the Venezuelan state, it signified a changed moment, but the point is precisely that that shift only started with Chávez's election.

³² Find quote from (Wood, Ellen Meiksins, 1995, 258).

³³ This discussion is based on (Wood, Ellen Meiksins, 1995, 258-259); I am changing Wood's argument slightly, but in a way that I do not think she would herself abstain from making, for the underlining political argument is consistent, I am shifting the focus from her discussion on pluralism's claims on identity, to the more radical reading underneath. In short, the political argument is itself consistent and cogent.

³⁴ (Wolin, Sheldon, 1996b, 39).

³⁵ (Wolin, Sheldon, 1996a, 37).

³⁶ Linz and Stephan's work would open a further difference, the difference between consolidation and non-consolidation of democracy. Their baseline is useful, "we mean by a consolidated democracy a political situation in which, in a phrase, democracy has become "the only game in town "And to which they clarify: "a narrower definition of democratic consolidation, but one that nonetheless combines behavioral, attitudinal, and constitutional dimensions," moreover, they continue: "Democracy becomes the only game in town when, even in the face of severe political and economic crises, the overwhelming majority of the people believe that any further / political change must emerge from within the parameters of democratic formulas". However, their basic error is made when trying to undo Dahl's clear strength, they confuse polyarchic pluralism and democracy: "Constitutionally, democracy becomes the only game in town when all the actors \in the polity become habituated to the fact that political conflict will be resolved according to the established norms and that violations of these norms are likely to be both ineffective and costly." That is, democracy makes no claims to resolving political conflict, for the very nature of answering that question makes democracy irrelevant (if conflict is to be denied, then are the poor really in control?). Nevertheless, this problem of "resolving conflict" certainly holds in regards to analyzing pluralism. They also remain correct in describing consolidation thus: "In short, with consolidation, democracy becomes routinized and deeply internalized in social, institutional, and even psychological life, as well as in calculations for achieving success." (.- all previous quotes are from; (Linz, Juan J. and Alfred C. Stepan, 1996, 5)) Rules of reproduction of any given society(See;(Brenner, Robert, 1986, ??);) are ontologically the same, and this is as true under democratic conditions and under non-democratic conditions, although it needs to be pointed out that, democratic norms may not be the same norms as pluralism. However, errors continue to accrue and on page ten, the "need to end conflict" is never to be questioned, they presuppose some conflict but the attempt is to mute conflict as much as possible, without asking why some conflict is necessary, especially in a democracy, when conflicts between the rich and poor are necessarily exacerbated. (Linz, Juan J. and Alfred C. Stepan, 1996, 10).

³⁷ (Finley, Moses I, 1973, 22).

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This is quite an important point, and one that shows a truly high threshold of democracy, the same condition may repeat in both democratic conditions and non-democratic conditions, but, the point is that politics is always an everyday condition, but political control for the poor is rare, and their control can be found in “shops and taverns,” “in the town square,” and at poor “dinner tables.” To be blunt, under pluralism, politics may be under discussion in the everyday by the poor, but only democracy fulfills the condition of this everyday discussion leading towards actual and direct political action. See the following from Pearson (2009) for a similar reminder from Venezuela’s contemporary situation. In her article on proposed changes to the law on community councils, she revealed the context of these discussions on the proposed law.

We talked about it in the car, we talked about it with friends, we met in one member’s house and talked about it over tea, and we talked about it in moonlit darkness caused by blackouts before various meetings. Our communal council had a few concerns and many praises about the reform to the communal council law, which had just been approved in first discussion.³⁸

Note the similarities between Finley’s understanding of the political community and its everyday life in Athens and Pearson’s suggestion of the same, is this a reconsolidation of democracy? We will come back to this question presently, but first the deconsolidation of democracy.

Section 2) Venezuela and the deconsolidation of democracy 1945-1988

The Chinese aphorism “May you live in interesting times” was always true for Venezuela³⁹, in this paper, the argument is that to understand present day (May 2017), it might be necessary to know the whole of Venezuelan history, including the history of the area before 1492, but, for this paper, the focus is rather on the most immediate seven to eight decades before 1988 as those that set up the present-day dynamics⁴⁰. they never had the state, if a state existed, it likely blocked markers of “liberal democracy” existed certainly existed in the twentieth century. These markers include, “minimization of conflict,” “strong political institutions,” “responsive pluralism.” To be clear, the argument of this paper is that rather, Venezuela’s democracy in these years remained quite elusive, and its “democratic exceptionalism” was much exaggerated, at least before 1989. Somewhat pluralist, unusually aggressive, but apparently polyarchic pact Venezuela. AS Levine begins his majestic book on Venezuelan politics, “modern political life began for Venezuela in 1936”⁴¹, but the tendencies of modernity had already arrived by the early 1920s⁴².

In comparison, Karl (1987) argues that out the basis for modern authoritarianism in Venezuela, and thus the “deconsolidation of democracy,” is the “long-term” capitalist development and “impact of oil, a commodity that initially served to buttress existing regime arrangements, eventually undermined the social basis for authoritarian rule, thus laying the groundwork for political change”⁴³. For example, for Fernando Coronil (2007), the “magical state” (aka the Venezuelan state before 1989) “...astonishes through the marvels of power...as a ‘magnanimous sorcerer,’ the state seizes its subjects by inducing a condition or state of being receptive to its illusions — a magical state”⁴⁴. For Coronil, this state is itself a “Petrostate,” that is, it “[held] the monopoly not only of political violence but of the nation’s natural wealth”

³⁸ (Pearson, Tamara, 2009). Finley continues, and this remains a good juxtaposition, especially in light of Pearson’s intervention: “nothing could be more unlike the situation today, when the individual citizen from time to time engages, along with millions of others, not just a few thousand of his neighbours, in the impersonal act of marking a ballot-paper or manipulating the levers of a voting-machine,” See; (Finley, Moses I, 1973, 22). Also see, Ciccariello-Maher, 2016@32}.

³⁹ See for example; (Tarver, H. Michael and Julia C. Frederick, 2006).

⁴⁰ Nevertheless in that long sense of history then, Venezuela has never truly been democratic at least not since the Spanish first arrived, and certainly not from the Spanish times, as both self-control (as Dahl’s threshold) and “control by the poor” (Aristotle’s) were certainly blocked by Spanish Colonialism, although it is possible that some of the indigenous peoples of Venezuela lived such differently political lives pre-contact that some societies were alike democracy.

⁴¹ (Levine, Daniel H, 1973, 14).

⁴² (Tarver, H. Michael and Julia C. Frederick, 2006, 14). For Tarver and Frederick, 1918 was that magical year.

⁴³ (Karl, Terry Lynn, 1987, 67). Also, see; (Coronil, Fernando, 1997, 4).

⁴⁴ (Coronil, Fernando, 1997, 5).

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⁴⁵ Levine sums up the importance of this type of state for Venezuela, “from 1908 to 1935, Venezuela suffered through the bloody dictatorship of Juan Vicente Gomez. His autocratic regime unified the country administratively and politically, effectively eliminating all traces of the nineteenth-century heritage of regional conflict and civil war” ⁴⁶. However, Levine continues

The oil revenues that began to flow in the 1920's reinforced the Gomez regime and helped create a national army and national bureaucracy- in short, an effective state machine for the first time in Venezuelan history.

The sheer growth and potential power of the central government is reflected in the expansion of overall state income and expenditure in the Gomez period ⁴⁷.

Karl, writing in 1987 more than a decade after Levine concurs.

...The birth of the modern Venezuelan state during the twenty-seven-year rule of the caudillo Juan Vicente Gomez (1908-1935) coincided with the discovery and exploitation of oil by foreign companies. As a result of this historic accident of timing, both U.S. multinationals and the U.S. government became essential props in the formation of modern authoritarian arrangements. Colliding with a weak and fragmented civil society, their impact was overwhelming: petrodollars became the bulwark of an alliance that included a hierarchy of military caudillos, the coffee and cacao producers of the Andes, and the Caracas commercial and financial elite. The foreign relationship was direct: Gomez seized power through a U.S.-backed coup in 1908 and subsequently utilized the oil companies to maintain the stability of his rule for almost three decades. In return for accommodating the companies through cheap oil concessions and favorable legislation, Gomez received rapidly growing revenues that allowed him to equip the first national army, expand a loyal state bureaucracy, lift the tax burden from elites, and develop a sophisticated repressive apparatus.

Oil initially protected this oligarchic alliance from the disruptive strains of industrialization. Because an oil-mediated integration into the world market provided the revenues for a continuous expansion of the country's import capacity, petrodollars delayed indigenous industrialization in this financially rich country. One manifestation of this structural dynamic was the consistent appreciation of the bolivar in relation to the dollar, a currency movement that created an incentive for imports rather than for domestic production ⁴⁸. Karl 67-68

Nevertheless, it is clear, that where Karl disagrees with Levine is in whether Gomez was the root of the beginning of the modern sense of stabilization or not. Whereas, Levine is more ambivalent, Karl is clearer and seemingly more cogent.

For me the point is that quite consciously, the type of governments and style of governance, depended on two main reasoning both internally and externally, “fear of communism” and oil development. At first, it was a fear of Russian communism but then Cuban style “Castroism” (and at times “Guevarism”) became dominant state anti-policy for obvious reasons. And then, the Venezuelan state needed to grow the policies necessitated by being a petroleum producing country the need to deal with the accumulation of oil wealth in the state and what that meant for both internal and external policies. A lot of top decision making was predicated on one of these two factors, if not both, most of the time in Venezuela. Moreover, there were several quite conscious methods towards elite circulation, an intent towards a broad coalition, but blocking the “more radical” elements, sometimes through incorporation, sometimes not. The point being the ways the disputes of 1935-1988 were resolved was through keeping elite circulation, and that the common resolution was paternalist exclusionary designs. Either through authoritarianism, such as Jimenez's coup, or later through pacted democracy, exclusion of the Venezuelan communist party, along with unapproved social movement layers, excluded the masses from the “democracy” quite accordingly. Moreover, as shall be seen the differences between the authoritarianism of the Jimenez coup could be matched with the authoritarian leanings of the pacted democracy. This was a decomposition of democracy, at no point during these years did it flourish, except for those times when it spilled over, but mass action too was mistrusted and a cause for concern, until it was not, the years starting in the 1980s, believed its own lies, and insulated the state against all mass movements, or so it believed.

Gómez's death in 1935, led to a tumult of political activity ⁴⁹. During a coup d'état in 1945, the *Trienio* emerged ⁵⁰. It was an agreement led by *Accion Democratic (AD)*, at the time a “leftist party,” and which was a key rival of the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV). Supposedly at the time, the masses were too intransigent and apparently insurgent, so as a

⁴⁵ (Coronil, Fernando, 1997, 4).

⁴⁶ (Levine, Daniel H, 1973, 14-15).

⁴⁷ (Levine, Daniel H, 1973, 15).

⁴⁸ (Karl, Terry Lynn, 1987, 67-68).

⁴⁹ (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 37-38, 39).

⁵⁰ (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 42-43)

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coup brought the Trienio to fruition, the coup led by General Marcus Pérez Jiménez, Chief of the General Staff, a key figure in the 1945 coup that led to the *Trienio*⁵¹. The problem for the non-PCV and non-AD parties appears to be that the strength of the AD party machine, first of all could not hold the masses, and thus a fear that AD was a true rival to the PCV, or that alternatively that the AD simply wanted complete control⁵². Jiménez seized power in a coup in 1948, disrupting the failing attempt by AD to normalize Venezuela's political community, but as Myers argues, the AD learned from that experience and formed a different sort of political than an all out coup, after 1958, it was a form of conflict resolution and conflict lessening that was needed. Nevertheless, many authors argue that the reason for the coup by Jiménez may have certainly been that "the AD had mobilized too many people and had too radical a programme"⁵³. Although, some authors emphasize that AD certainly learned from their errors, which is how they were able to succeed in 1958⁵⁴. Although Ellner (2010a) indicates that AD machine was too weak at the time of the *Trienio* to fully bypass international communism, by the time that Jiménez's reign was over AD had moderated its politics⁵⁵.

Nevertheless, my understanding is that Gomez had helped establish some of the political institutional arrangements that survived the Jimenez's coup, in fact, it is possible that Jiménez's state continued some of these institutions. Thus, a decade later when Jimenez fled, the leaders of the *Trienio* were ready, and were able to constitute themselves into the institutional frameworks that pre-existed them. The pattern was the same as in 1945, cut off the communist party, incorporate as much as possible the non-radical elements in mass politics, in order to disguise the actual non-radical political project that could be had at the time, and agree to keep the peace. Insofar, as mass politics was part of Venezuela's political community, it was necessary to find ways to manage the political challenges put forwards, especially, if your program, as consistent as it was from 1945 through 1998 to ward off the communist party, along with all other radical positions.

The point is that the development of the Venezuelan state matched the double barreled concern of the twentieth century, and as Venezuela was caught between "fear of communism" and oil development the *Trienio* through Jimenez and the *Punto Fijo pact* all had a similar dynamic coursing through the developments of the political institutions, only with certain aspects strengthened after Jiménez's flight from Caracas, and others weakened. The Venezuelan state was comfortable in both its cloths of authoritarianism and of the "exceptional democracy," and looking forward, was as shocked by the actions of February 1989, as were the people who participated in the *Caracazo*, but the point is quite that the structure of government, was quite consistent from 1935 through to 1998, the only (major) difference in the political community was the period of 1989-1998. The joke is of course, that truly beyond the actual leaders of the state the form of the Venezuelan state did not shift that much from the years 1945-1989, the politics shifted, the policies changed, but the state itself, at times incorporating the masses, but at all times, blocking their control or access to control the political community.

By the time of the emergence of the Trienio in 1945, the bipolar world of the Cold War had also emerged and it is fair to argue that historical context here is of the utmost importance. Jiménez was obviously a dictator, continuing in power until 1958 despite losing the 1952 election. The repressive Jiménez dictatorship's virulent anti-Communism,¹⁶ accounted largely for his ability to stay in power in this period, but it must be matched up against the similar disdain in the leadership of the *Trienio* and the later pact⁵⁶. But again, we must insist on understanding the historical emergence of both the Trienio and the Jiménez dictatorship as in between not sultanism or authoritarianism like Linz & Stepan (1996) suggest, but as in-between communism/non-communism, (although at the time, AD was

⁵¹ (Tarver, H. Michael and Julia C. Frederick, 2006, 95, 96-97). Also see,; (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 47).

⁵² (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 44-46). (McCoy, Jennifer, 2004b, 792).

⁵³ (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 19); Also, please see the following,; (Levine, Daniel H, 1973, 38, 41); (Karl, Terry Lynn, 1987, 73, 75, 82); (Meyers, David J., 2004); (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 48).

⁵⁴ For example,; (Raby, D. L, 2006, 136); (Coppedge, 2005#875@20); (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 43, 48); (Levine, Daniel H, 1973, 38, 41, 47).

⁵⁵ (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 42); (Levine, Daniel H, 1973, 38).

⁵⁶ (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 46-49, 51-55, 59); also see, (Meyers, David J., 2004, 19).

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‘radical’) ⁵⁷. As Ellner shows, Jiménez did offer concessions to the population of Venezuela even at the moments of greatest repression ⁵⁸.

Once the Jiménez dictatorship fell in 1958, it was easily bandied about that Venezuela had an “Exceptional democracy.” As I wrote in my MRP, “the nation was stable and it had a ‘strong representative democracy’ and certainly counting the *Trienio* years had been part of the ‘Second wave of Democracy’ ⁵⁹, is the standard claim of political science about Venezuela. To be clear, Venezuela did have a somewhat politically different claim in Latin America to have a sustained pluralist polity for the majority of the twentieth century. The argument that follows is that “this second wave ... lasted for years, during which time other countries in Latin America experienced brutal dictatorships” ⁶⁰. This is the aforementioned magical state, with its oil wealth “that allowed it to ‘buy off’ the population” through some form of welfare state, developing slowly through the twentieth century, but consolidated at best through the early years of the PFP, but with antecedents all the way back to Gomez ⁶¹. The southern cone countries of Latin America, but most especially Cuba and Colombia (as always) are instructive differences through these years too, so too were other OPEC countries. With this “magical state” in mind, the Venezuelan state programs were consciously created by Venezuelan political (and thus, ruling) elites, to maintain power cynically even when they failed to live up to the “pact of the magical state,” as had been previously communicated brought about by neo-liberal restructuring starting in the early 1980s, which itself is obviously elite maneuvering ⁶². The point is that by 1958 the elite settled into the long term of political control, and only in 1989, was their control unsettled, an understatement, the pact was ended in 1989. But I jump ahead of myself, let us stay at 1958.

The aforementioned ‘exceptional’ democracy was in fact created by an agreement called the *Punto Fijo Pact (PFP)* ⁶³ among three political parties *AD* ⁶⁴, COPEI (Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente) ⁶⁵, and URD (*Unión Republicana Democrática*) ⁶⁶. AC Clark (2009) would argue that as the pact was signed at *Punto Fijo*, the location of Rafael Caldera’s ⁶⁷ house, the name was accidental ⁶⁸. For Clark, it was only for an accident of history that the name of the pact suggests an “overly rigid and oppressive” pact, he has a point, and the accidental nature cannot be stressed enough. Nevertheless, as the name by which this pact is known is suggestive of both the consciously anti-democratic thinking of the ‘exceptionally democratic’ planners and the way that the pact did historically develop, the fact that the name was the fixed point is quite apropos ⁶⁹. This pact also eventually included business organizations, unions, the military and the Catholic Church ⁷⁰, but it began life as a way to incorporate the three parties only into a power sharing arrangement. The idea was to share power wherein one election would be ‘won’ by the first party and then the next election would

⁵⁷ [Karl, 1987#780@87].

⁵⁸ (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 47, 49);

⁵⁹ (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 20). See also,; (Ellner, Steve, 2003b, 7, 10); (Wilpert, Gregory, 2007, 183); (Meyers, David J., 2004, 794); (García-Guadilla, Maria Pilar, 2005, 111); (Coppedge, Michael, 2005, 289, 290, 297, 308); (Clark, A. C, 2009, 30-31).

⁶⁰ (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 20-21).

⁶¹ (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 21). See also,; (Coronil, Fernando, 1997, 5); (Wilpert, Gregory, 2005, 10-11); (Hellinger, Daniel, 2003, 30).

⁶² (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 21). Also see,; (Coronil, Fernando, 1997, 224); (Wilpert, Gregory, 2007, 83); and; (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 89). Finally,; (Levine, Daniel H, 1973, 8); (Meyers, David J., 2004, 794).

⁶³ *Punto Fijo*, literally *Fixed Point*. See (Clark, A. C, 2009, 27-30). Again, not sure what in Clark’s non-cogent arguments warrants his anyminity.

⁶⁴ AD was itself split between the radicals and the “realists” who steered a “true course,” by creating a balance. In 1960, the balance was confirmed when radical Adeco’s left to help form a guerrilla movement.

⁶⁵ *The Independent political electoral organizational committee*-which was a more Catholic/Conservative party also led by a charismatic leader and which split in the 1970’s between the radical secondary party leaders, the ‘realist party bosses,’ and the party masses, the copeyanos, who followed both sides.

⁶⁶ *Republican Democratic Union*- a party that simply had a charismatic leader, similar to the other two parties, and which had a small lasting mass presence clustered around those leaders. Soon after the signing, URD, the third party disappeared as a political force –although as a political party it still existed for some time.

⁶⁷ The leader of COPEI and one of Venezuela’s Presidents (1969-1974, 1993-1998).

⁶⁸ See; (Clark, A. C, 2009, 28); Also see; (Levine, Daniel H, 1973, 36); (Coronil, Fernando, 1997, 217); (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 51-86); (Meyers, David J., 2004, 18); (Karl, Terry Lynn, 1987, 66, 82-83).

⁶⁹ (Levine, Daniel H, 2002, 248).

⁷⁰ See; (Levine, Daniel H, 1973, 43-47); (Coronil, Fernando, 1997, 218-220); (Meyers, David J., 2004, 15, 17); (Clark, A. C, 2009, 30-31).

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be 'won' by the second party ⁷¹. In between elections, the two parties, COPEI & AD, were more or less mutually supportive of each other ⁷². The unions, business organizations, the Church, the military and all of the political parties (excluding the Communists) found comfort in each other's presence, agreeing to lessen social conflict and to support each other in whatever opposition arose. This meant that the two parties were to alternate in power ⁷³. This created a form of "Managerial Democracy" ⁷⁴ that had its beginnings in Venezuela before the Jiménez dictatorship, but which was fully consolidated after Jiménez's coup was ended ⁷⁵, a type of *Magical State*, that at the same time was predicated on violence ⁷⁶.

It is too obvious to mention the artificial stability created by the pact ⁷⁷, but nonetheless, as the pact "parceled out governmental and other civil service positions amongst interested parties including private companies" ⁷⁸. This was certainly of a pact to prevent Communists and other radical groups from gaining political and popular power, as seemed to be happening across the world as part of the second wave of "democratization" ⁷⁹. Wilpert (2007) identifies the "active[...] exclu[sion] any challenges, particularly from the left, such as the socialists and the communists" ⁸⁰, which means that the pact, while lessening social conflict, consciously avoided attempting to end social conflict, and thus maintained the presence of the relations of conflict found in any given "modern" society: relations of racial power, class power, male power, colonial power, and state power.

There would seem to be some levels of popular mobilization, but this was mostly "Channeled into elections" ⁸¹. This was seemingly how the AD attempted to consolidate itself after 1945, but even that was not completely apparent ⁸². Fernandes (2007) suggests that there were many mass mobilizations throughout the 1940s and up to the end of the 1950s ⁸³. By the beginning of the 1960s, the mass mobilizations died out, and the radical generation of the later half of the 1960s, saw itself as part of COPEI, which allowed COPEI to successfully expel its radicals, similar to how AD had done so earlier ⁸⁴.

This period was, simply stated, "exceptional," but while no dictators took power, beyond insurgent guerrilla forces which plagued the state soon after the PFP was formed, there was also persistent human rights violations along with naked state/business corruption ⁸⁵. This corruption was so widespread, such that it was called the "popular looting" ⁸⁶. Moreover, there was a generalization of the effects of state power, and state violence became commonalized in the lives of the poor, of the indigenous, of the afro-Venezuelans and in women's communities ⁸⁷. Consequently, the idea of Venezuela being an exceptional democracy during this period of

⁷¹ (Levine, Daniel H, 1973, 43); (Hellinger, Daniel, 2003, 28-29); (Coronil, Fernando, 1997, 217+ 219); (Coppedge, Michael, 2005, 297); (Meyers, David J., 2004, 18); (Karl, Terry Lynn, 1987, 66, 82-83).

⁷² (Alvarez, Angel E, 2003, 150-151); (Levine, Daniel H, 1973, 42); (Coronil, Fernando, 1997, 218 + 220).

⁷³ (Clark, A. C, 2009, 19, 22-25); (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 54, 58-60, 104); (Coronil, Fernando, 1997, 24); (Meyers, David J., 2004, 12, 15); (Karl, Terry Lynn, 1987, 79 - 80, 82-85, 87-88, 91).

⁷⁴ The term Wolin (2008) uses to describe the representative democracy that has emerged in the past hundred years, means "...the application of managerial skills to the basic democratic political institution of popular elections...[making elections adventures in profitability by ensuring that] a large campaign contribution represents the kind of surplus power a dynamic capitalist economy makes available," see; (Wolin, Sheldon, 2008, 140).

⁷⁵ (Coronil, Fernando, 1997, 220, 225); (McCoy, Jennifer, 2004b, 269); (Romero, Anibal, 1997, 11). (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 52).

⁷⁶ See for example; (Coronil, Fernando, 1997, 34).

⁷⁷ (Levine, Daniel H, 2002, 299); (Meyers, David J., 2004, 11-12); (McCoy, Jennifer, 2004b, 265); (Clark, A. C, 2009, 22); (Wilpert, Gregory, 2007, 11).

⁷⁸ (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 21-22); (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 51-55, 56-58, 59-60). (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 103). (Wilpert, Gregory, 2007, 27).

⁷⁹ (Roberts, Kenneth, 2003, 57); (Meyers, David J., 2004, 11 + 16); (Wilpert, Gregory, 2007, 11); (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 58, 62-63, 73); (Karl, Terry Lynn, 1987, 73, 75, 82, 85).

⁸⁰ (Wilpert, Gregory, 2007, 11)

⁸¹ (Levine, Daniel H, 1973, 35), (Coronil, Fernando, 2008, 1). Also, see; (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 99, 102).

⁸² (Levine, Daniel H, 1973, 28-29 + 49-50); (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 99 + 104); (Meyers, David J., 2004, 14 + 18); (McCoy, Jennifer, 2004b, 270, 272).

⁸³ (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 99, 103-107). Also see; (Coppedge, Michael, 2005, 301); (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 58, 62-63, 73); (Karl, Terry Lynn, 1987, 73, 75, 82, 85).

⁸⁴ (Karl, Terry Lynn, 1987, 85); and; (Raby, D. L, 2006, 136); (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 59, 64, 68); (Meyers, David J., 2004, 21).

⁸⁵ For Guerrillas, see (Clark, A. C, 2009, 25-26); for the rest, see; (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 22).

⁸⁶ (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 316).

⁸⁷ See for example; (Ciccariello-Maher, George, 2013).

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its history is patently false ⁸⁸.

For all of the theorists of liberal, capitalist, modern, representative “democracy,” this consociational pact created strong institutions, and each institution worked to “avoid” conflict with the other. And it is this avoidance of conflict, or the specific incorporation of conflict into the strong institutions meant that a threshold of something could be achieved. Dahl suggests that the concepts of threshold is key ⁸⁹. Dahl further clarifies the different thresholds for democracy and what he calls “polyarchy” ⁹⁰. Granted,

The concentration of forms of action reflects a conscious desire to avoid situations where conflict gets out of hand, to maintain (through party organization) a high degree of control over the consequences of action. Opposition and conflict are tolerated, and indeed, built into the system, but opposition is constrained to work within a set of common procedures and forms. Politics is supposed to work through elections, the congress, elected officials, and the like--through explicitly political mechanisms: Forms of action which are difficult to control (such as mass street demonstrations) are discouraged and often suppressed ⁹¹.

Is a paragraph that any liberal theorist could have written, but instead it was written by Daniel Levine (1973), in his famous historical text on Venezuela, and yet, its description is not that far off from how politics is supposed to work in Canada as well. This history cannot be read backwards, as there were many struggles between the radical and the non-radical wings of the parties, but the leaders, the elites of the parties and unions, were clear in the direction they pushed Venezuela, towards “managed democracy.” The political parties of AD and COPEI volunteered themselves into the “managed democracy” role of the political parties to hammer out agreements between the different factions of the polity ⁹². It was as Karl (1987) bluntly states the exchange between “the right to rule for the right to make money” ⁹³, which was an exchange consistent from Gomez’s presidency and down the years, especially once oil was discovered. The PFP gave the leaders the foundation of the direction and the strength to persist down the path, but the path was laid out even before the *Trienio* ⁹⁴. This path created a stability that allowed the state to stave off political unrest through defusing mobilization and through buying off the population, tactics that even preceded oil, but became ever more dependent once oil was discovered ⁹⁵. This buying off grew during the early to late 1970s (especially after the destruction of the guerrilla movements, including their incorporation into the pact) when the oil crash precipitated by the rise in international oil prices ⁹⁶ led to the

⁸⁸ For Linz & Stepan (1996), pacts are decidedly non-democratic, as even consociational pacts can degenerate and atrophy (Linz, Juan J. and Alfred C. Stepan, 1996, 56+61). But their argument is weakened by their earlier insistence on the “core institutions of democracy” including interparty alliances and their reliance on elections; consequently, their disdain for pacts still allows them to sneak pacts back into their form of democracy through the basic interparty and societal agreements (Linz, Juan J. and Alfred C. Stepan, 1996, 8); Also see.; (Karl, Terry Lynn, 1987, 83). Their argument is further weakened through their insistence on capitalism being the baseline of economic relationships, which was certainly true of Venezuela throughout most, if not all of the twentieth century (Linz, Juan J. and Alfred C. Stepan, 1996, 11-13). Especially since the development of oil, but certainly by 1945, capitalist social relations had consolidated themselves and which by 1945, Venezuela was well incorporated into the informal empire of the United States and thus showed the symptoms of Pax Americana, forms of capitalist development. In fact as the Punto Fijo pact was almost completely consociational, it only excluded the non-elites- the masses and the radical left, and while guerrillas were eventually included in the pact they needed to be “brought in” later, it fulfilled all the other requirements for the Linz & Stepan definition of democracy, and thus explains the “exceptionalism” of these years, for example, see.; (Hawkins, Kirk A, 2010a, 51), (Karl, Terry Lynn, 1987, 84). But as it did not include the masses, it was a false plurality, and even then the difference between pluralism and democracy are also glaring. Similarly, for Dahl, as there was both public contestation and participation, the limits of polyarchy had been reached (Dahl, Robert, 1971, 3); see also (Karl, Terry Lynn, 1987, 83). As the reins of power were contested between two or more parties and were shared between these two parties, since there was popular mobilization, Dahl’s extremes were quite fulfilled; (Dahl, Robert, 1971, 6); (Hawkins, Kirk A, 2010a, 58).

⁸⁹ See previous discussion.; (Dahl, Robert, 1989, 6).

⁹⁰ (Dahl, Robert, 1989, 220-223).

⁹¹ (Levine, Daniel H, 1973, 8).

⁹² (Meyers, David J., 2004, 21); (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 58, 62-63, 74).

⁹³ (Karl, Terry Lynn, 1987, 85).

⁹⁴ (Levine, Daniel H, 1973, 43, 46). (Meyers, David J., 2004, 17); (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 59, 61, 73-74). (Clark, A. C, 2009, 31); (Karl, Terry Lynn, 1987, 6, 83, 88).

⁹⁵ (Karl, Terry Lynn, 1987, 80, 88); (Levine, Daniel H, 1973, 47, 49, 84-85).

⁹⁶ (Wilpert, Gregory, 2007, 88); (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 71, 85).

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Venezuelan government's expansion of national benefits to its citizens⁹⁷. Increasingly, the magical state soared to even greater heights⁹⁸. Indeed, in 1976, under the first Presidency of Carlos Andrés Pérez (CAP), Venezuela nationalized its oil production and increased social spending⁹⁹, even though human rights violations and population displacement occurred¹⁰⁰. The poverty rate declined to ten percent of the general population, with just over two percent of the total population of Venezuela living in extreme poverty¹⁰¹. But was this the "reconsolidation of democracy," or was it not the "deconsolidated form of democracy?" As the people, the poor, women, Afro-Venezuelans, Indigenous Venezuelans were systematically excluded from leading the political community, and in some ways even participating in the everyday aspect of politics?

But the rise of the "Magical State" took its toll as well and Venezuela's ascendancy from third world nation to almost first world was limited by the vicissitudes of the capitalist world market to which it was subjected. By the early 1980s, the price of oil started to fall and successive governments responded by enacting several neo-liberal reforms, raising austerity as the norm¹⁰². The point should be clear, even before 1989, Venezuelans had already long been faced with the restructurings required by the market in both the state and in the national economy as well¹⁰³. In Venezuela, February 18, 1983 became known as "Black Friday"¹⁰⁴. Hellinger refers to Black Friday, the neoliberal structural adjustment, as "the devaluation of 1983"¹⁰⁵. Hellinger argues that what it meant for the population of Venezuela during the 1980s was a changing social response to the balance of forces in the state, and economy, and he explains that "the distributive capability of the system waned, and with it confidence that *this* democracy would spur development and opportunity"¹⁰⁶. This devaluation, of course, as pointed out above, had followed the 1973 oil boom and the consequent ever greater inflow of capital, both FDI and internalized and thus, Black Friday was hard on the rich, and the state, but the austerity programs were devastating to the poor. Consequently, by 1989, and following the oil boom of 1973, the poverty rate had risen dramatically to including sixty-two percent of the population with thirty percent of the population living in extreme poverty in that decade¹⁰⁷. Electoral participation also declined during this time¹⁰⁸. Nevertheless, what is quite interesting to compare is the level of demonstrations reported on, include a relatively high level of demonstrations per year, almost on average, 162 (1983 through 1988)¹⁰⁹, throughout the 1980s did nothing in the political community, there was no shift in political community, except maybe frustration and as an exhaustion of that frustration

By the 1988 elections, Venezuelans were starting to notice that their 'magical state' was disappearing into thin air, and that their democracy was 'exceptional' only for the ways that economic inequality had exponentially increased¹¹⁰. The "Magical State" had pretty much disappeared, but the *PPF* still existed, and while the parties could still win votes, the days of mass mobilization had ended. Elite infighting only revolved around who had more right to the

⁹⁷ (García-Guadilla, Maria Pilar, 2005, 111). (Meyers, David J., 2004, 17). (Clark, A. C., 2009, 22).

⁹⁸ (Coronil, Fernando, 1997, 10); (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 71-73, 74).

⁹⁹ (Coronil, Fernando, 1997, 11); (Coppedge, Michael, 2005, 310); (Raby, D. L., 2006, 140); (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 71); (Tarver, H. Michael and Julia C. Frederick, 2006, 127).

¹⁰⁰ (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 106).

¹⁰¹ (Baxter, in; (Ellner, Steve; Daniel Hellinger, 2003a, 115).)

¹⁰² (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 106 + 107); (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 79, 81, 85). (Raby, D. L., 2006, 49); (Roberts, Kenneth, 2003, 59); (Wilpert, Gregory, 2007, -108); (Coronil, Fernando, 1997, 305, 370, 375, 391); (Coppedge, Michael, 2005, 314).

¹⁰³ If neoliberalism is only a project of privatization, then the leaders of the PFP pact did not enact a project of neoliberalism, as Corrales (2005) claims. However, if neoliberalism is a project of changing financial sector regulations, governments downloading services to more local governments with lower tax bases, increasing national debt, destroying and dismantling the welfare-state and thereby increasing impoverishment and further restructuring of economic relations, amongst other forms of restructuring then the reforms enacted after Pérez's first presidency, certainly fulfilled several of these types of projects.

¹⁰⁴ (Marquez, in; (Ellner, Steve; Daniel Hellinger, 2003a, 199).)

¹⁰⁵ (Hellinger, Daniel, 2003, 30).

¹⁰⁶ (Hellinger, Daniel, 2003, 30).

¹⁰⁷ {Bruce, 2008#@2}; (Coppedge, Michael, 2005, 297, 302); (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 106); (Roberts, Kenneth, 2003, 59).

¹⁰⁸ CITE.

¹⁰⁹ (Lopez Maya, Margarita, 2002, 203).

¹¹⁰ (McCoy, Jennifer, 2004b, 277); (Roberts, Kenneth, 2003, 59-60); (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 107); (Coppedge, Michael, 2005, 307); {Morgan, 2007#@81}.

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trough of the state. When, in 1988, Carlos Andres Pérez (CAP)¹¹¹ ran for and won the presidency for a second time, Venezuelans thought that at last a return to the 'magical state' had begun and his inauguration on February 2, 1989 was well attended¹¹². However, in the few weeks following his inauguration, Andrés Pérez announced the strongest adjustment programme yet, the package of *El Gran Viarje* ("The Great Turnaround")¹¹³. This package came as a complete surprise to the majority of the population¹¹⁴, and it confirmed the death of the "Magical State." As Hellinger (2003) points out: "an undercurrent of Political resentment with origins in the period 1941 to 1948 ran just below the surface of Venezuelan Politics during the Punto Fijo era, only to resurface with the crisis of legitimacy after 1989"¹¹⁵. But the historical importance of 1989 cannot be understressed for within the same February of Perez's second inauguration, Venezuela had irrevocably started to change; it had begun the process of the Bolivarian Revolution¹¹⁶. That is, in one achievable threshold is if there is a spike in yearly protests.

In February 1989, Venezuela changed, and the name of "exceptionalism" actually began to be earned. The *Caracazo*¹¹⁷, as it became known, lasted for only a few days but it irreversibly shook up the country's political and economic landscape¹¹⁸. On February 27, 1989, workers and students woke up not to the expected thirty percent hike in bus prices, which would have probably been calmly accepted, but to a more than hundred percent hike in bus prices¹¹⁹. The thirty percent hike in bus prices was government mandated based on the incoming austerity measures¹²⁰. But the gouging rise in the cost of buses angered people¹²¹. Jean Paul Sartre describes waiting for the bus like so:

Let us illustrate these notions by a superficial everyday example. Take a grouping of people in the Place Saint-Germain. They are waiting for a bus at a bus stop in front of the church. ... These people - who may differ greatly in age, sex, class, and social milieu - realise, within the ordinariness of everyday life, the relation of isolation, of reciprocity and of unification (and massification) from outside which is characteristic of, for example, the residents of a big city in so far as they are united though not integrated through work, through struggle or through any other activity in an organised group common to them all. To begin with, it should be noted that we are concerned here with a plurality of isolations: these people do not care about or speak to each other and, in general, they do not look at one another; they exist side by side alongside a bus stop. At this level, it is worth noting that their isolation is not an inert statute (or the simple reciprocal exteriority of organisms); rather, it is actually lived in everyone's project as its negative structure. In other words, the isolation of the organism, as the impossibility of uniting with Others in an organic totality, is revealed through the isolation which everyone lives as the provisional negation of their reciprocal relations with Others. This man is isolated not only by his body as such, but also by the fact that he turns his back on his neighbour - who, moreover, has not even noticed him (or has encountered him in his practical field as a general individual defined by waiting for the bus). ... This plurality of separations can, therefore, in a way, be expressed as the negative side of individual integration into separate groups (or into groups that are separate at this time and at this level); and, through this, as the negative side of everyone's projects in so far as they determine the social field on the basis of given conditions. On the other hand, if the question is examined from the point of view of groups, interests, etc. - in short, of social structures in so far as they express the fundamental social order (mode of production, relations of production, etc.) - then one can define each isolation in terms of the forces of disintegration which the social group exerts on individuals. ...In other words, the intensity of isolation, as a

¹¹¹ Pérez was President twice, first (1974-1979) (CAPI) and then (1989-1993) (CAP II).

¹¹² (Hellinger, Daniel, 2003, 31); (Roberts, Kenneth, 2003, 62); {Morgan, 2007#@82}; (Raby, D. L., 2006, 141); (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 106); (Coppedge, Michael, 2005, 309, 31, 313). (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 89); (Coronil, Fernando, 1997, 372-374).

¹¹³ In some ways then, CAP II was that brief period before his Great turn around, and a new CAP -CAP III ruled after. {Morgan, 2007#@82}; (Coppedge, Michael, 2005, 305, 311); {Canache, 2002#@73}; (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 106); (Wilpert, Gregory, 2007, 184); (Hellinger, Daniel, 2003, 31); (Roberts, Kenneth, 2003, 62-63); (Raby, D. L., 2006, 141); (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 90, 92).

¹¹⁴ (Romero, Anibal, 1997, 21).

¹¹⁵ (Hellinger, Daniel, 2003, 28). Especially as, WHO? shows

¹¹⁶ This paragraph and the following are drawn quite liberally from my MRP. (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 25-26).

¹¹⁷ The Caracazo was three to five days of rioting, starting on February 27th, 1989 and which started in Caracas, but even on the first day, the occurrences were throughout Venezuela. It is a key part of the discussion in this paper, and as per the argument of this paper, the Caracazo is the actual beginning of the Bolivarian Revolution.

¹¹⁸ (Burbach, Roger; Camila Piñeiro, 2007, 181); {Morgan, 2007#@82}; (García-Guadilla, Maria Pilar, 2005, 115-116); (Romero, Anibal, 1997, 12, 14-15); (Ellner, Steve, 2003b, 7); (Roberts, Kenneth, 2003, 63); (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 90).

¹¹⁹ (Lopez Maya, Margarita, 2002, 121); (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 315); (Clark, A. C., 2009, 54); (Raby, D. L., 2006, 49); (Coronil, Fernando, 1997, 376).

¹²⁰ (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 95).

¹²¹ (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 106); (Wilpert, Gregory, 2007, 188).

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relation of exteriority between the members of a temporary and contingent gathering, expresses the degree of massification of the social ensemble, in so far as it is produced on the basis of given conditions.¹²²

For Sartre, and I think this is quite a powerfully cogent quote, the moment of waiting for the bus is normally quite a serialized moment of life, no sense of collectivity (unless something is wrong, the bus is late, a horrible accident, etc.), the person is alone and their part in the collective is very solitary. However, in 1989's hot waning days of February, waiting for the bus, became a completely different social phenomena. Caracas, a city surrounded by lush green mountains wherein lie the popular barrios (poorer neighbourhoods, e.g., unpaved, without services such as electricity, water or, if available then unreliable), and which need the bus services for the commute to their jobs and schools in the city, rose angrily that morning. The hills around Caracas became alive with the peoples' anger¹²³. That day the uprising quickly spread across almost all of Venezuela¹²⁴. The next few days saw the continuation and expansion of the tumult to such an extent, that almost all of Venezuela was ignited¹²⁵. The rioting got so bad that the army was called in, and officially, at least 287 people were killed (but unofficially up to 3000 people), which as Coppedge (2004) amongst others, points out, was one of many human rights violations of the PFP regime¹²⁶.

One of the observers of the *Caracazo* and its aftereffects was a young military officer named Hugo Chávez Frías, who had already been planning a revolt against the government, and who quickly realized that the events of the *Caracazo*, and in the following years the people of Venezuela were eager for a change and had yet to achieve it¹²⁷. On February 4, 1992, Chávez set into motion a coup d'état that ultimately failed but which catapulted him onto the political scene¹²⁸. During the televised report, as he was being led away to prison, Chávez took full responsibility for the failed coup and said: "Lamentablemente, *por ahora*, los objetivos que nos planteamos no fueron logrados en la ciudad capital" ("Unfortunately, *for now*, the objectives that we had set ourselves have not been achieved in the capital.") This call seemed to resonate with the inquiet masses, who had remained on protest non-stop since the *Caracazo*, for example, between 1989 and 1992, there were two thousand and ninety-four manifestations, demonstrations, wildcat strikes, official strikes and blockades in Venezuela¹²⁹. This would indicate to me, a breakdown of the PFP, before Chávez, and a possible reconsolidation of democracy, also before Chávez truly entered the scene.

The elites, in an effort to appease the masses, who continued their daily revolts, subsequently arrested, impeached and incarcerated Perez in 1992, before the completion of his term of office¹³⁰. Thus, attempting to complete what Chávez had started, the removal of Pérez, but without any attempt to alter the power structures sunken into place. In the 1993 elections another former Venezuelan president, Rafael Caldera¹³¹ was re-elected after promising to stop the neoliberal policies of his predecessor¹³². But within a few years, he too succumbed to the neoliberal succubus and put forward neoliberal reforms¹³³. Although, the 1990s are often

¹²² (Sartre, Jean-Paul, 2010a, 256-257).

¹²³ (McCoy, Jennifer, 2004b, 270); (García-Guadilla, Maria Pilar, 2005, 113, 113, 115-119); (Raby, D. L., 2006, 141).

¹²⁴ (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 94).

¹²⁵ {Morgan, 2007#@82}; (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 91, 94); {Canache, 2002#@73}; (Romero, Anibal, 1997, 14-15); (Lopez Maya, Margarita, 2002); (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991); (Lopez Maya, Margarita, 2003a); (Lopez Maya, Margarita; Luis Lander, 2005).

¹²⁶ (Coppedge, Michael, 2005, 309); (Clark, A. C., 2009, 4); (Raby, D. L., 2006, 49, 142); (Wilpert, Gregory, 2007, 184); (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 95); (Burbach, Roger; Camila Piñero, 2007, 181); (Hellinger, Daniel, 2003, 31); (Roberts, Kenneth, 2003, 63).

¹²⁷ (Clark, A. C., 2009, 51); (Burbach, Roger; Camila Piñero, 2007, 11); {Bruce, 2008#@xvi}; (Coppedge, Michael, 2005, 314); {Canache, 2002#@72-73}; (Hellinger, Daniel, 2003, 40); (Norden in; (Ellner, Steve; Daniel Hellinger, 2003a, 96).)

¹²⁸ (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 96); (Wilpert, Gregory, 2007, #187).

¹²⁹ (Lopez Maya, Margarita; Luis Lander, 2005, 95); {Morgan, 2007#@82}; (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 108).

¹³⁰ (Clark, A. C., 2009, 27, 107-108); (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 97); (Raby, D. L., 2006, 143); (Hellinger, Daniel, 2003, 34); (Roberts, Kenneth, 2003, 65).

¹³¹ Rafael Caldera, an ex-founder of COPEI, the Punto Fijo pact party and for who he had been a Venezuelan president in the years (1969-1974), left his party in 1993 in an opportunistic and cynical attempt to create a new pact, attempting to salvage the elites hold on Venezuela politics. Even after the "Magical State" was ending, with the rise in Austerity, the PFP itself held until the *Caracazo*.

¹³² {Morgan, 2007#@82}; (Raby, D. L., 2006, 143); (Clark, A. C., 2009, 26-27); (Coppedge, Michael, 2005, 291, 311); (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 99).

¹³³ (Raby, D. L., 2006, 143); (Wilpert, Gregory, 2007, 183); (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 61-64). Also see; (Hellinger, Daniel, 2003, 34); (Roberts, Kenneth, 2003, 65). And even after the *Caracazo*, ex-President, Caldera who was also a founder of a PFP party was still able to win. But, his grip on power was quite feeble in face of all of the protests making his continued governability quite lackluster. These protests increased when Caldera, himself, had his *Gran Viarje*.

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seen as the years of the breakdown of the *PPF*, in actuality it broke before 1990. In the 1993 election, many voters did not vote and Caldera won, primarily based on his promise to not go neoliberal. Nevertheless, Caldera was not a choice against the *PPF*, but was an attempted continuation of the *PPF*, even if his leaving destroyed his ex-party, COPEI. The bigger problem for the managed democracy of the *PPF* continued to be the after-shocks of the *Caracazo* and not Caldera's betrayal of COPEI. Caldera was also responsible for the release of Chávez from prison two years into his sentence ¹³⁴. By the next election, in 1998, Chávez was elected to the presidency based on his promise to institute a constituent assembly, thereby changing the constitution to allow the people a space to develop and institute participatory democratic practices in various aspects of their lives ¹³⁵.

To say that all these liberal pluralist definitions of democracy misunderstand the very nature of democracy itself would be an understatement; it is in their root definitions that we find the basic inconsistencies, for both in the definitions and in the actual history of Venezuela under the *PPF* system ¹³⁶. While one could argue about the corruption that always existed in the *PPF*, the real betrayal was to be found in non-democratic material relations - that is, the exclusion, repression, domination and oppression and exploitation of the lower classes, of Venezuelan women, of the "non-European" races (the indigenous, the newer immigrants, and the Afro-Venezuelans, who faced domination by the "whites" and criollo oligarchs). And although there were some women, some non-Europeans and some workers who benefited, this does not mean that all women, all non-Europeans and all workers benefited from the *PPF*.

In fact, the vast majority were consciously excluded in a system that was operated in their name. The point of examining these years and the theorists of the *PPF* form of democracy is to come to terms with the difference between the years 1958-1988 and between the years of 1989-2010. Those who led the pact proclaimed, theoretically at least, their adherence to democracy and democratic norms but even in their theory and more importantly in their practice, dropped democracy by the wayside, like all forms of liberal-democracy that sideline protagonistic and participatory democracy ¹³⁷. Arguably, the conscious aporia of the defenders of Venezuela's previous form of democracy is their belief that the exclusion of the masses through demobilization and political pacts can be called democracy. This is the very opposite of anything that could be called democracy as the masses were excluded from the control of the *polis*. The difference between *PPF* democracy and the democratic impulses born in the *Caracazo* lie in their different daily practices, part of which shall be examined below. For example, in analyzing these two periods (before 1989) and (1989-1998), let us remember the number of protest annually on the average there were per year, and after the *Caracazo* at least until 1998, there were, an outstanding difference ¹³⁸. In the next part, we shall examine the *Caracazo* and the system that emerged in Venezuela that was completely the opposite of the system that had previously existed.

Interlude: Paragraph 3 and the Radiation of Dissonance

Maybe it started like this ¹³⁹:

It is quite early morning, and yet still dark, but you have been up for an hour at least, showered, scrubbed, hunger gnawing at you but breakfast set for *Hija* and *Hijito*. A *yogur* in your purse for breakfast, and having closed the house door you begin walking towards the bus stop, the *yogur* is all you take from the house, but as you are going to treat yourself with an *arepa con queso* later on break, you justify so much and so little. You are incredibly tired, although your thirtieth birthday is still, but a few years off. *Hija*, now twelve, helps feed *Hijito*,

¹³⁴ (Hellinger, Daniel, 2003, 34); (Roberts, Kenneth, 2003, 65); (Clark, A. C., 2009, 26-27).

¹³⁵ (Clark, A. C., 2009, 61); (Alvarez, Angel E, 2003, 150-151); (Hellinger, Daniel, 2003, 43) (Roberts, Kenneth, 2003, 66).

¹³⁶ (Meyers, David J., 2004, 19, 25-27); (Karl, Terry Lynn, 1987, 85, 87, 89); (Clark, A. C., 2009, 29); (Wilpert, Gregory, 2007, 12).

¹³⁷ (Karl, Terry Lynn, 1987, 64-65, 80, 82, 84); (Clark, A. C., 2009, 23).

¹³⁸ (Lopez Maya, Margarita, 2002, 203)

¹³⁹ NB: The first chapter of my dissertation begins with a similar phenomenological-literary attempt at reduction, one of the reductions, paragraph 3, is of the same moment at time, taken from another similar previously non-politicized perspective. This interlude is not directly taken from my dissertation, but it draws heavily upon that work.

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and takes care of him, while you are working at the offices cleaning in the mornings and in the afternoon and evenings you wait tables at a bar in Caracas. You live with the kids in a small shack more than an hour outside of Caracas, and you are doing your hardest to get by. You are almost at the bus stop, and behind your tiredness, you can almost pretend at the life you could have had if you had been able to finish high school and go to university. It was so early but you were already feeling the heat of the day. The bus was the very early bus, which means that you would have a seat, and be able to catch a little sleep and you might even feel refreshed by the time you get to your office, in time to maybe snatch a coffee before the boss and all the managers, including your own arrived. That is, unless they scheduled a big meeting without letting you know, as had happened just last month, or like last week the boss's brother had arrived on an early flight and they surprised you early in the office when they lined up some bankers, and others for a meeting, you had had to run around quite a lot that day, the bathroom at work was a mess and you did not have time to clean it, and that was the week that *Hijito* was sick, and those nights working the bar, left you even more drained. Sometimes your bosses were too demanding, and you could never say anything, you just cleaned or served the drinks, usually, even if the bosses were not the problem your exhaustion was.

Rounding the path, you can suddenly see that a few more people are at the bus stop than normal, and while you know one or two of the other mothers, more people there are strangers than people you know. And they seem to be upset. Surprised, wondering at the abnormality of it all, you rush over. Someone tells you that the bus price had been raised. You remember someone saying something on Friday, but only now does it register. You are confused, a price hike seems almost ordained, "you would pay it" you tell someone and sometime later, you tell someone else. You do not understand why no one seems to agree with you paying it, but still you do not approach the one bus that seems to have been trapped there, you are not getting on the bus, no one is, and you still do not get why. You now know a few other people milling around, including your friend and, there, an acquaintance, and you are not sure when it started but someone has been shouting for a while now that "the ticket price was now..." . The bill from the hospital from *hijito's* stay was due today, and the bus tickets for your whole week are going to disappear the monies for the bill, not to mention your shopping for the week ¹⁴⁰. "Someone had been chanting before, *no es justo*, now someone else takes up the chant, and then another person. And something inside you flickers. Later, you realize that you had started living differently that day in February 1989. 1989 was one of the distinct endings of the Russian and international Communist experiment of the twentieth century. 1989 was the end of something, but it was also the beginning of something else in Venezuela. And at the moment when the change happened, you changed as well" ¹⁴¹.

¹⁴⁰ I would like to highlight that the following sentences are directly drawn from the Dissertation, Paragraph 3, Chapter 1. The rest was of another person walking down the road, experiencing as Zolberg highlights, a "moment of madness," For Zolberg, see (Zolberg, Aristide R., 1972).

¹⁴¹ These paragraphs are indeed indebted to Sartre's usage of the bus stop as a moment of "serialization" (a much more meaningful descriptor to a political analysis than "simple equilibrium," or other studies of "elite circulation," both of which of course remain facts that need to be explained). Studies of serialization are more useful than studies of equilibrium or elite circulation because political relations are not assumed, rather, they are questioned for at the heart of serialization, remains the question, why? And how can one end serialization? Whereas equilibrium studies assume their equilibrium, they also their elites, that is, that equilibrium is a system with elites. The need to surpass Aristotle's natural relationship of ruling; is the Beauvoirian moment of ambiguous political relationships and actions, Beauvoir amply gets beyond Aristotle, with one quick remark.; (Beauvoir, Simone de, 1976, 83); (Aristotle, 1992, 1259b32). The point is that the ambiguously dialectical reality of life was that at the bus stop: (Sartre, Jean-Paul, 2010a), serialization was ended. Sartre would have been howling, Enjoying the irony, the very moment of serialization itself being the trigger of a revolution, the Bolivarian Revolution triggered by the Caracazo, the Caracazo, a moment of ending serialization, was ironically touched off by bus riots, and normally in Venezuela a day of riots, would mean nothing (see **Lopez Maya, García**;) But those February days touched off a nerve across Venezuela (i.e., in most areas of the country), and signified the end of the previous polity enacted under the pact of power sharing, and the lie of "peaceful transition" between governments. This, was to only truly happen between the years previous to Chávez's presidency. Nevertheless, it appears that at least under Chávez's tenure, the revolution left Venezuela with an increased reverence for democracy CITE. It is with this in mind that I thus must also quote at length a case study from Fernandes (2007): In the third section of the paper I will dissect what the case studies in Fernandes teaches us, never the less, I'm simply going to let this full quote stand here, *por ahora*, as they say. Note that this is the 2002 coup, so either a late development of politics, or rather, someone who had probably already felt politically different for a while, but only consciously understood late in the development of the revolution, what their politics meant.

For me this comes since Chávez. I am 40-something years old, and never in my life have I cared about what was happening in my country, but also my Carretera where I live.... Its like I am fulfilled. This work fulfills me. I want to be involved in everything, I really fell that someone needs me and I can do it... That's why I say, it was Chávez who awoke the woman. He gave us importance, value. ... I studied, but I never felt interested to participate or do other things, to care about people other than myself... It was this voice that told us, we could do it, that if we are united we can achieve something. I was one of those people who never thought about taking to the streets, like I did on April

Section 3) Venezuela and the Reconsolidation of democracy 1989-2002

We have thus finally begun to understand Venezuela, and the corrupt-corporatist "democratic" structure underlying both the magical state and the Punto Fijo Pact of Venezuela throughout the twentieth century. But now we have arrived at that magical year: 1989. We will now establish how the people of Venezuela had grown quite restless under a supposed democracy wherein they held no power, and had lost the previous Keynesian corporatist-balancing act against impoverishment, but they were not revolting as of yet either. The Caracazo, as interesting as it is, brought only a few new institutional forms to Venezuela, but the importance of it lay elsewhere. For the Caracazo exposed the rottenness of the state and of capital for those who lived it, but moreover, it showed the elites their full lack of control, and while the corpse could be said to laying around until Chávez's election in 1998, truly it was in 1989 that the pact was killed ¹⁴².

In my previous research, I came to realize that one of the key important things about the Caracazo the many different names (I identified at least 11 different names, coming from different geographical locations and sectors of the population) ¹⁴³. These many names are a very the first clue of the puzzle that is the Caracazo. For me the fact that each community has given the events its own name, suggests the pivotal nature of the *Caracazo* for different communities, to the extent that, as they say, a critical mass was achieved. That is, my claim is precisely that the moment of the *Caracazo*, was a moment of rupture with what came before. The point being that it was a surprise to all involved and in many ways it created a broader community than one neighbourhood alone, as a form of mass action. My aim is the reconstruction via EP Thompson of mass action that, I know that I fall quite short of the shadow cast by Thompson's pure method. Where Clark, for example is not wrong is in the following example on the *Caracazo*, which he says was

a popular uprising in reaction to a series of probably sensible but poorly explained economic measures imposed by Perez. ... The most significant grievance was that Perez had increased the price of gas, which ... affected the cost of many other products and services. Looting was rampant, and the country really was in chaos ¹⁴⁴.

11gh, when they overthrew our president. I said "My God, is this what you feel when you fight for what is yours?" I went all the way to Maracay in a car, I took a flag, and I said to the others, "My God, what am I doing?" I didn't recognize myself... This was all asleep within me and because of this man, his calling, his way of being, or I don't what, I got involved in this thing.... And then I wanted to face the president himself, and tell him how things should be, you may want to do it this way, but I don't agree, that we should do it in this other way to achieve what awe aim to do. That's why I tell you, it was an awakening, a calling, and he made us women go out into the streets, he made us realizes that as women we can also struggle., we can do it and be involved.

¹⁴² Before continuing on the Caracazo, there was something else in the months before that is worthwhile mentioning, the Amparo massacre: On October 29, 1988 during the Presidential elections, the state proclaimed that around sixteen fighters of ELN (Ejercito Liberacion Nacional the Colombian Guerilla group) had supposedly crossed the border into Venezuela and, after confrontation, with the Venezuelan military had been killed; (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 300); (Lopez Maya, Margarita, 2003a, 212); (Lopez Maya, Margarita; Luis Lander, 2005, 93). But after the sudden appearance of two survivors of the massacre, it turned out that the Venezuelan army had killed fourteen residents of the Venezuelan border town Amparo; (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 301-302); (Lopez Maya, Margarita, 2003a, 212-213). It could be argued that Perez was elected to deal with both the massacre and the austerity since 1983, amongst nostalgia for CAP's first term; (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 310-314); (Romero, Anibal, 1997, 15). The rest is, as they say, history.

¹⁴³ For example: "El Caracazo" (The "Explosion of Caracas"); {Gott, 2000#@16}; (Lopez Maya, Margarita, 2003a, 117, 189-119). "La Poblada" (The "Popular"); (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 311). "El Sacudón" (The "Shake-up"); (Lopez Maya, Margarita, 2003a, 117, 136). "El Masacrón" (The "Massacre"); (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 310, 311). "Las Saqueos" (The "Sacking"); (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 316). "Los Eventos" and "Los Successos" (the "events"); (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 311). "La Guerra" (The "War"); (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 311, 351, 322); (Lopez Maya, Margarita, 2003a, 124). "El Dia que Bajaron Los Cerros" ("The Day that the Mountains Came Down"- the poorer parts of Venezuela are in the mountains); (Márquez, Patricia C, 1999, 16). "El Dia que El Rio se Salio de la Madre" ("The Day That the River Left its Bed" - There are also very poor areas beside rivers); (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 310); (Márquez, Patricia C, 1999, 24). "27F-89" (February 27th, 1989); (Lopez Maya, Margarita, 2003a, 120); (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 311).

¹⁴⁴ See.; (Clark, A. C, 2009, 54). Truly, one could question the purpose of the anonymity, especially for a book that is not quite the academic work it purports to be, some of the arguments stay in the truly silly vane: e.g., the "oh, look both Adolf Hitler and Hugo Chávez wrote n using words, therefore their writing style is the same; "As if there were not enough substantive similarities between Chavez and Hitler, their literary style is also very similar. Chavez's prose and imagery in this letter are eerily reminiscent of Hitler's Mein Kampf"; See; (Clark, A. C, 2009, 113). Clark's style of argument, would thus easily allow a more unscrupulous person to then pick up this text as "God's doctrine" and thus quote this piece of shit argument as gospel, i.e., in no way can Hitler and Chávez be compared beyond being humans. I choose the vulgate for the reason stated below, if Chávez was vulgar for remarking about his diarrhea, does that vulgarity destroy the revolutionary? -- For my non-vulgar

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Nor as Coronil and Skurski follow Petkoff's claims on the *Caracazo*, Petkoff is not wrong about the facts of the case, as follows.

The protesters were not organized workers but people pushed to the edges of society—to prostitution, drugs and alcoholism. Petkoff argued that the Venezuela that "erupted like a volcano" on February 27 was not 'the Venezuela of workers organized in trade unions or associations. No, it was another Venezuela, it was the non-organized Venezuela, the Venezuela that has been piling up in a huge bag of wretched poverty.' According to him, the Venezuela that 'came down from the hills or up from the ravines' was 'a Venezuela of hungry people, of people who are not part of the conventional organization of society.' This Venezuela had produced 'the roar of a wounded animal.' He blamed the politicians of the ruling parties for having created this other Venezuela, labeling them Doctor Franksteins: 'They created a monster, and this monster came out to complain, came out to demand its share of the immense petroleum booty of all these years'¹⁴⁵.

The point, beyond discussing the truth or not of the claims of Clark and Petkoff is their surprisingly grudging sense of the type of Moral Economy that Thompson suggests seems to explode that morning in February¹⁴⁶.

AS it would appear the *Caracazo* was the moment that both the state and elites lost their hold on the political community, the widespread nature and shocking strength of the

response, please see the rest of the essay, for a way to examine the contemporary "exceptional" political community and political process of Venezuela. For the vulgate, read below.

Nevertheless, what is true and yet may be much less important in how Chávez uses his racial profile, which yes, while mixed, as other presidents have been, Chávez was "darker" and "more integrated" with his "racial mixture;" See Clark for the language,(Clark, A. C, 2009, 34), and moreover, and more importantly, he was also directly identified as result of the racialization performed by the opposition, Chávez's ties to different social movements and his work to normalize the most radical tendencies, never backfired, even if it was precisely this that too is vulgar to those who would claim to dismiss his claims to his racial identity. It is in that sense that A.C. Clark remains wrong on this fact and so many others, although like all caricatures maintains some form of truth. Or take the fact that lamentably Chávez's lack of diplomacy, did not win him friends, but at the same time, while hating the sometimes misogynistic tenor, Chávez's crudity helped pull in the "crude," those "vulgar masses," who may not otherwise be present, and it must be remembered that the trick of humanity is that it is itself crude, we all get diarrhea sometimes; (Clark, A. C, 2009, 74, 107). Clark's complaint about Chávez's crudity in discussing his diarrhea can thus easily get dismissed, Chávez is human, all humans shit, Chávez shat, the reader shits. This is not even vulgar, what is truly vulgar is Clark's usage and the general trick of rulers, which calls out Chávez for a misogynistic streak against his female enemies, which is completely true; (Clark, A. C, 2009, 39). However, sometimes involves distinguishing something that is cruel and wrong, arguing that as one thing is cruel, misogyny and any defence of it is itself cruel, against something that is crude. Political crudity occurs when something works against the naturalization of power relations, may imply the very foundational ethic from which to begin (Beauvoir), which it could be said that Chávez as a figure truly had, the *right* ethics to end oppression. It remains important, to firstly, distinguish Chávez's faults, from that of his revolutionary role. IT would seem that as much as women fought for rights, male power was unable to hold in the Bolivarian revolution, in that revolutionary forms of feminist action has openly pushed the revolution in collectively feminist ways, and Chávez's role in the revolution as an ally of revolutionary feminism cannot be overstated, even if sometime in his clownish guise he flirted with misogynist language according to Clark.

This other aspect of his crudity, I.e., that he was of the masses and held a mass connection, then the truth of the "vulgar clown" cannot be denied, e.g., in the very true way that Chávez was also feminist, fighting for the rights of all Venezuelans, including and in this analysis especially, women. This vulgar Bolivarian prince of Machiavelli, also includes the vulgarity directed towards him, Chávez also was proud of being told to "shut up" by Spain's fascist king (something that Clark attempts to portray as a sad!) as proud as to claim his heritage Bolivarian along with his racial make-up, neither are no small badge to be worn against the Spanish crown, killer of indigenous men and women, owner of slavers, both men and women, and supporter of the fascist killer, Franco, killer of Spanish men and women (Clark, A. C, 2009, 89). But his vulgarity also had the point of it, for feminists too recognize that to put it vulgarly and thus also crudely, "more opportunity" for education for women, e.g., who never had the opportunity before, is in-itself a good, that spirit of Bolivarian prince fully wrecks Imperialism and misogyny. That is, something the Bolivarian revolution has provided, it is here. That is the vulgarity of opening up opportunity for both classes and other social phenomena to reclaim their *patria* as against the elites is the true and necessary "vulgarity" shining through, the vulgarity that leads towards emancipation, vulgar for the very nature of being ruled includes a notion of vulgarity for the elites. But, what is vulgar for the oligarch is not necessarily so for the masses nor should it be considered. Fernandes, points to several ways to read feminist political action during a revolution such as Venezuela's (page) that remains independent of remnants of a misogyny in Chávez and which actually can recognize the exact stronger and more accurate impulse in Chávez against male power and against racial power in a way that other presidents preceding him did not. For another example, one of the many criticisms leveled at Maduro is that he was a bus driver, this vulgar non-elite thinks he can be president? Of course, this insult goes back to Aristotle and Plato, the vulgar non-philosophers, non-property owners, the vulgar non-leisured dare to take political power in Athenian democracy, against the 'aristocrats (and if not the oligarchs),' the philosophers and would be true political actors? However, I get sidetracked, this paper is about the Revolution, Chavismo, not Chávez; El pueblo bolivariano, not el comandante. To be direct, this paper is about the vulgar masses in revolution, not the refined—read: squalid— elite opposition in reaction.

¹⁴⁵ Teodoro Petkoff, congressional speech excerpts from, ; (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 327). Petkoff is an ex-guerrilla parliamentarian and ex-leader of the Political party MAS (Movimiento a Socialismo, "Movement towards Socialism"). Ellner points out that one of the main parties to support Caldera in 1993 was MAS, led by Teodoro Petkoff who was then Financial minister at the time of Caldera's package, and who was quite willing to go as far as he could to sustain a pact, for Petkoff, democracy was at risk. Petkoff is currently actively involved as part of the opposition against the BR. This is what Petkoff defends against the hordes. Unfortunately, there was no space to do so in this paper, but it is completely necessary to come to terms with the composition of the Venezuelan Demos, to understand the full polity, and while we think that in this quote, Petkoff is quite right, we suspect that this Venezuela that he is describing, the hungry Venezuela, are in-fact, the working-poor, and is not just the "lumpen" as he seems to suggest. For if the statistics are correct then informal work had increased exponentially, and thus the workers in the trade unions had become a minority. This is also key to understanding the reconsolidation of Venezuela's democracy.

¹⁴⁶ For Moral Economy, see; (Thompson, E. P., 1991, Chapter 4 + Chapter 5). Please especially note the discussion on 260-261.

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masses revealed a weakness for both the elites and the state. The easy response was both societal and state violence, and the loss of power was quickly replaced by the usage of repression. Within days, and by March 3rd, it would seem that the government had killed between 300-3000 of its own citizens¹⁴⁷. But even with this state violence, with the horror facing “rise of the rivers,” why would I still insist that this was the moment of a reconsolidation of democracy? Precisely as Coronil and Skurski (1991) identify as the moments of the “events/war” is the reason, and this too is very suggestive of Thompson’s moral economy,

Soon people turned against grocery stores and food markets. Leaders, generally young men who broke store locks with crowbars and smashed windows, emerged, urging people to take what was theirs. The people surging into the stores found to their outrage that stored deposits of subsidized basic food stuffs that had disappeared from the market were waiting to be sold at marked-up prices. Cases of powdered milk, cornmeal, pasta, and coffee were passed to the street and distributed, as the outnumbered police looked on. Some policemen, themselves poorly paid, helped looting take place in an orderly fashion or took part in it as well. A collective decision to occupy the streets and invade the stores, suspending the rules regulating public movement and commerce, took shape. The street became the site for the contestation of market and political controls widely regarded as immoral and oppressive.¹⁴⁸

The elite’s language used to describe the events is tinged with fear of savagery and the loss of (bourgeois, “white”) civilization¹⁴⁹. Politics was not normal, if politics should be normal, whose politics? Who decides?

Pushing towards a “moral economy,” Coronil & Skurski (1991) reveal an important implication of the *Caracazo*:

Looting dissolved momentarily money’s ability to regulate collective life. The invasion of business establishments rendered meaningless the barriers that money normally imposes between commodities and consumers, between public and private space. In the midst of an uncertain and dangerous situation, there were overtones of a village fiesta--a sudden abundance of liquor and grilled meat shared at impromptu gatherings in the poor neighborhoods on the hills circling Caracas. Bottles of champagne and brandy made a surprise appearance at parties now enlivened by dance music broadcast throughout the hills from newly acquired audio equipment. The smoke of barbecues mixed with that of burning stores. Against the “etiquette of equality” that ruled street behavior in this self-defined egalitarian society, the poor sought to assert, even if only momentarily, their image of real relations of equality.¹⁵⁰

This is one side of what was called the war, the other were the bodies that began to arrive at the city morgue sometime around 9 pm on the 27th of February¹⁵¹. The military was split between those leaders, who, like Chavez, had been part of the generation that had studied social sciences rather than counter-insurgency at the School of the Americas¹⁵², and those who embraced the typical military response of violence. The police, who in Venezuela are notorious for their corruption, were also split between those who joined with their families in the Barrio and helped loot, and the majority who used the ‘events’ as an excuse for target practice on their fellow citizens¹⁵³. Taking matters into their own hands, self-defense organizations in middle- and upper- class neighbourhoods were also formed “to protect property”¹⁵⁴. Again, it can be asked how I can argue that this moment represented a reconsolidation of democracy for Venezuela. For me the point is that whereas before the *Caracazo*, the term is the emergence of a new form of moral economy in Venezuela, through the construction of new forms of solidarity

In their examination of the *Caracazo*, Coronil & Skurski (1991), paint a vivid picture of

¹⁴⁷ Cite

¹⁴⁸ (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 315-316).

¹⁴⁹ (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 322). As they point out, “This unabashed inscription of state policies within a colonial framework-the acceptance of massive state violence to oblige acquiescence and forestall greater decline, and the identification of popular protesters as a “primitive tribe” and of Congressmen as “civilizing generals”-went unnoticed, for the opposition shared its underlying premises.” Further on is a great instance of elite fear.

¹⁵⁰ (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 317).

¹⁵¹ CITE

¹⁵² The School of Americas (now called the “Western Hemisphere Institution for Security Cooperation”) is a school in the state of Georgia, U.S.A., where Military leaders, especially from Latin America, learned how to kill, torture and otherwise engage in counter-insurgency. In the 1970s, the Venezuelan military started allowing its officers to take degrees in the social sciences in Venezuelan universities, Chávez himself was part of the program and has an unfinished master’s degree in Political Science. Many of the officers, who had participated in the social science program, were pleased with the uprising and felt solidarity with the people of Venezuela, and they refused orders to shoot the people refusing to use force against their own people, (Levine, “10 Thesis,” 264). Also see: (McCoy, Jennifer, 2004b, 270).

¹⁵³ (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 315).

¹⁵⁴ (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 323).

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the lower classes of Venezuela extending their reach and force nationally ¹⁵⁵. The lower classes also explored and utilized a different meaning of the concept of *saqueo popular* (popular looting), which had alluded to years of sacking the country by National elites, international elites, i.e., the political, economic, and social elites whose political community was Venezuela 1935- 2017, although, the elites ¹⁵⁶. However, during the Caracazo the *saqueo popular* (popular looting) acquired a double meaning. The appropriation and distribution of goods that were usually sold for profit were now to be distributed to those in need ¹⁵⁷. And as Coronil & Skurski show a "loose organization within and among families" emerged ¹⁵⁸. These organizations began stopping trucks and distributing goods to the community. Emboldened organizations found huge storage depots with which they were able to feed hungry communities ¹⁵⁹. These chains of expropriation, exchange and distribution, and the organizations that drove them altered the face of Venezuela's democratic governance for at least the next twenty-eight years and for the foreseeable future.

The *Caracazo* did display some xenophobic behaviour, but rather than assume this is the predisposition of the masses, maybe what cannot be justified can be explained, as some immigrants to Venezuela had become shop owners, and during the looting, "anti-immigrant" graffiti accused them of hoarding ¹⁶⁰. But, as I am willing to hold the tendency of "looting" to be ambiguous social phenomena (i.e., not necessarily bad, but not necessarily good, the context of looting and how it works needs to be analyzed), this may be the *Caracazo's* only immediate negative effect, in the "play of anti-immigrant" solidarity, unjustifiable. The positive aspect of the problem is the very question of social solidarity, how much human solidarity can be constructed at any given moment is a key question. Also, what about the deaths of the *Caracazo*? Who violated human rights? The point being that the deaths "caused" by the *Caracazo*, can certainly be laid at the feet of the state, rather than the rioters themselves, so too can the violations of human rights, be laid at the hands of the governments of 1988 through 1998 (and thus too, those that had power from earlier in the twentieth century, even, a quite consistent twentieth century development).

After the Caracazo, Venezuela was in complete turmoil. The 'Punto Fijo pact' ¹⁶¹ was broken and the people were constantly protesting - insisting on their right to have their needs met. The Venezuelan people continue to exercise their collective will and collective force to achieve their goals. Between 1992 and 1998, there were over five thousand protests throughout the country ¹⁶². This constant tumult had serious effects on the country's politics and economics. The Punto Fijo Pact disintegrated not because of elite infighting, they would have been happy to have it continue, and one could imagine counterfactually that it would have continued all things being equal, but because in 1989, the Venezuelan peoples refused to be governed by the pact, the pact was ended ¹⁶³.

Although, some could argue that Chávez's changes, especially at first, were cosmetic, it is possible that his form of constitutionalism and pace set by the masses allowed for further development of institutional forms, even so, the years preceding Chávez's first election, he was already helping to foster these different institutional forms, as shall be seen, which is a plus for at the least, his form of political functioning, Chávez could be said to overall had a positive effect in Venezuela's political community. Some of the key changes included the name of the country, and the corresponding number, from "Republic of Venezuela" to the "Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela" and from the "IVth" to the "Vth" republic ¹⁶⁴.

¹⁵⁵ (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 316). This paragraph is extracted from my MRP, see; (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 32-33).

¹⁵⁶ (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 316).

¹⁵⁷ (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 315-316).

¹⁵⁸ (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 316).

¹⁵⁹ (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 315 + 316).

¹⁶⁰ (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 315 + 319).

¹⁶¹ (Lopez Maya, "Movilizacion," 222).

¹⁶² (Lopez Maya, Margarita; Luis Lander, 2005, 95); (Burbach, Roger; Camila Piñeiro, 2007, 181); (Roberts, Kenneth, 2003, 61).

¹⁶³ (Raby, D. L., 2006, 153).

¹⁶⁴ (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 176-179); (Coronil, Fernando, 1998?, 15 + 19); (McCoy, Jennifer, 2004b, 282); (Lopez Maya, Margarita, 2008, 162); (Wilpert, Gregory, 2007, 18). Unfortunately, while the discussion of what exactly the constitution means to Venezuelans, will have to be delayed, this is a key point towards understanding their current situation. For the constitution is "a living constitution," and is used by the people

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Cosmetic as they may be, some might even say “window dressing,” but it is also possible that the constitution of the new republic “created a completely different kind of [institutional] democratic form: ‘protagonist’ of ‘civilian power”¹⁶⁵. These institutional forms were intended to foster a political community that “functioned both within and against the state.”¹⁶⁶ “While the state continued in its typical functions, citizens, through this fourth branch of political power and via their participatory role, would construct decentralized loci of legitimate power. These loci, which while separate from the state, combined executive, legislative and judicial powers in the hands of the citizenry”¹⁶⁷.

Before examining the new institutional forms, a word should be made about the sometimes too strong pull of electoral politics. My argument is that while, at times, these new forms of political power, can be folded within electoral battles, as much as insisting that the program was only electoral or that consequently, Chavismo is itself only an electoral program is misreads a lot of what has been different in Venezuelan since 1989. The point is that some of the organizations that would appear to be only electoral in nature were also centered around studies and learning both of the constitution, Venezuelan history, and other political issues. It is through these and other various study and work groups that Venezuelans have reconsolidated their democracy. These study groups truly started to appear once the new constitution was written, but some long predated this moment.

The most important question about contemporary civil society in Venezuela is whether new political institutions represent a fundamental rupture from those that existed prior to the Caracazo, in other words, did something change in the Venezuela’s political community¹⁶⁸? The questions around the reconsolidation of democracy in Venezuela, are then recentred around the experiences of Venezuelans of democracy in their everyday life. For example, one can ask whether the institutions of the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela inclusive or exclusionary in their organization of the community (of course, the question of exclusion is very important, does democracy depend on total inclusion? Aristotle suggests otherwise, democracy may be more important as a specific form of political community, wherein the poor have control over the political community, in a way that otherwise never happens in any other political community. That is, democracy, precisely depends on some form of exclusion, the exclusion of the propertied from controlling the political community.) Do the new institutions contain the totality of the population of Venezuela? Do they help enfranchise all of the Venezuelan population or only a part of it? It is here that we can understand what I mean by reconsolidation of democracy, for new political institutions, different from those that had emerged in the Gomez era and the different ones that had grown with the Punto Fijo pact were superseded by new forms of mass political organizations, the following section will examine Bolivarian circles, misiones, community councils, and end on communes, but it must be noted that there are several other institutional forms, such as co-operatives, worker’s management, amongst others, that are left unexamined in this paper¹⁶⁹.

as their own law, which means in practice it is changeable and malleable, and it is something that they claim as their own on a level that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms could never be claimed by Canadians. **Burbach & Piñeiro, “VenePartSoc,” 184. Gibbs, “Business,” 271. Ciccariello-Maher, “DP,” 51. Levine, “10 Thesis,” 265-6. Fernandes, “BarrioWomen,” 270-1. Wilpert, Changing, 29-44. Raby, DemoRev, 198.**

¹⁶⁵ (Alvarez, Angel E, 2003, 151-152); (Gibbs, Terry, 2006, 270); (Wilpert, Gregory, 2005, 23); (Wilpert, Gregory, 2007, 37); (McCoy, Jennifer, 2004b, 281).

¹⁶⁶ (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 34); and see: (Ciccariello-Maher, George, 2007, 44 + 51).

¹⁶⁷ (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 34); (Alvarez, Angel E, 2003, 153-155); (Burbach, Roger; Camila Piñeiro, 2007, 184, 186-187); (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 119); (Gibbs, Terry, 2006, 270); (Wilpert, Gregory, 2005, 21); (Canache, 2002#@85); (McCoy, Jennifer, 2004b, 277, 279, 280).

¹⁶⁸ (Levine, Daniel H, 2006, 169-173).

¹⁶⁹ There have been many worker’s attempts at fostering a different workplace sociality. However, these have tended to be examples of failures. Although, they too have shown high rates of mobilization. For example, in 1998 alone there were “877” co-operatives; {Azzellini, 2009#@173}; in the following years the number crested at 262, 904, before falling to between thirty thousand to sixty—thousand active co-operatives (Piñeiro, Camila, 2009, 309); {Azzellini, 2009#@172}. This evolution can be traced to the system of NUDES “NUDES (Núcleos de Desarrollo Endógeno- Nucleus for Endogenous Development), which are networks of co-operatives that offer training through the Misión Che Guevara. The trainees are expected to return to their communities and create new co-operatives. As part of these creations, they are expected to coordinate their activities with other co-operatives and with the communities in which they live, although this has not always worked successfully as Azzellini points out in his insightful piece; {Azzellini, 2009#@173-174}.

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According to several sources, one of the first institutional forms that emerged as part of Chávez's attempts to maintain the ongoing unformed revolution, were the "Bolivarian Circles" (BC). The form first began soon after Chávez was released from prison in 1995. Based within communities, BCs had "four objectives: reading, social investigation, providing community relief, and engaging in electoral battles... As discussion groups, the BCs were supposed to ... gain an understanding of the new constitution. As an organization, the circles had to investigate and learn the situation of the communities in which they were formed. This investigation would then allow the circles to triage community concerns and [supposedly] begin to address community needs" ¹⁷⁰. They also engaged in a diversity of tactics, some circles lasted only briefly and were folded into the "Electoral battle units" of the MBR-200 in Chávez's first election in 1998 ¹⁷¹. Others were not so short lived. Both Kirk Hawkins & David Hansen's 2006 article "Dependent Civil Society: the *Círculos Bolivarianos* in Venezuela," and Hawkins' 2010 book *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspectives*, suggest that BCs were not as short term as they first appear. First, some as suggested emerged around 1995, others only around 1999, and others around 2001 and following years only crystalized further ¹⁷². Although my research suggests that this history is disputed, and contradictory, nevertheless, the point is that since at least 1995, through to 2010, Bolivarian Circles played a small role in mobilization of the masses.

Be concerned with the well being of the Masses and the Methods of Work ¹⁷³

Timelines, as suggested by Ciccariello-Maher makes some sort of sense as well, informally organized groups can certainly persist, and later overlap with each other ¹⁷⁴. The point is that this holds true for all of the following identified institutions, some forms are called into existence by suggestions from Chávez, on the other hand, other forms appear due to the nature of experiences, styles of organizing, communities, and historical processes undertaken by the people who create them. In other words, while sometimes political forms are suggested by state actors, they are not technically creations of the state ¹⁷⁵. Of course, structurally the formal mandate may alter the informal structure, but according to my research, even that may not be true. For example, the formal structure mandated a membership of BCs between seven and eleven ¹⁷⁶, but other research suggests some circles had up to hundreds of members, and some smaller ¹⁷⁷, the average reflecting the mandated formalized structure.

I do not want to focus exclusively on BCs, but at the height of their usage they had approximately 2.2 million members with an estimated number of 200,000 different circles ¹⁷⁸. This is quite a high number, and which means even given a high rate of failure (which I do not have research for, but which we can reasonably assume), huge numbers of Venezuelans participated in these organizational forms. It is possible then that BCs constitute an example of a form of a creation of political community that allowed the participants to begin to constitute themselves as sovereign. For example, Hawkins & Hansen (2006) specify:

Their failure have different reason, a lack of co-ordination, for another the effect of the state's conservatism: the constant battle for funding or maybe as a corrupting , too little help from the state or alternatively too much, and finally although the workers are trying something different, the competitive pressures brought by market dependency limit possibilities. Another factor for failing is that unionization has also either been too little or too much, in the inherent conservatism of union institutions; (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 49-51).

Other attempts include co-management, and rarely worker's management; (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 50-51). All face similar hurdles. On the other hand, as stated high mobilization pushes for some hope. Also, as will be explained, communes are also supposed to be areas of production, which may help with co-ordination, fostering social responsibility, and dual power structures against both the state and elite institutions.

¹⁷⁰ (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 35). But also see; (Wilpert, Gregory, 2007, 44); (Hawkins, Kirk A, 2010a, 179, 190); (Hawkins, Kirk A; David R. Hansen, 2006, 108).

¹⁷¹ (Hawkins, Kirk A, 2010a, 176-177). Also see; {Ellner, 2007#@229}; for the Electoral Battle Units of 47 *Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario-200*, Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement-200, the 200 signifies two hundred years after the death of Bolívar.

¹⁷² CITE

¹⁷³ (Zedong, Mao, 2006).

¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁵ CITE

¹⁷⁶ (Lopez, Nicolas, 2006); (Hawkins, Kirk A; David R. Hansen, 2006, 102 + 106); (Hawkins, Kirk A, 2010a, 177);

¹⁷⁷ (Hawkins, Kirk A; David R. Hansen, 2006, 106); (Hawkins, Kirk A, 2010a, 182).

¹⁷⁸ (Hawkins, Kirk A; David R. Hansen, 2006, 103); (Hawkins, Kirk A, 2010a, 190).

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Attempts by the National Coordination to direct the Círculos resulted in considerable friction between them and the local leadership, and parallel organizations of Círculos emerged¹⁷⁹. ...Some skeptics might argue that the Círculos could not meaningfully be considered an example of civil society because they were initiated by a call from Chávez and were asked to register with the national government. However, if we define civil society as voluntary organizations...then the descriptive data presented above demonstrate that the Círculos should be considered part of Venezuelan civil society: membership the Círculos was voluntary and probably not significantly financed by the state, and most of the Círculos eventually created their own parallel national organization that they felt better represented their interests; in at least some cases Círculos were formed that never registered at all¹⁸⁰.

This may indeed begin to offer the complexity involved in the Bolivarian revolution, and that weird and somewhat off-putting mixture of officialdom and sovereign institutions¹⁸¹. IS officialdom and formality a deconsolidation of democracy or could it still be a reconsolidation? Although it could be suggested that a form of continuity between PFP institutions and BCs is that BCs helped in electoral battles, it would appear that BCs had a deeper mandate than other, earlier, PFP forms. Most BCs died out, and the 2004 survey highlighted by Hawkins & Hanen suggested only a few remnants of BCs existed¹⁸². But surprising Hawkins (2010b) did find that some BCs remained, some maintained their longevity¹⁸³.

It must be noted, especially with the twenty-twenty vision of early 2017, that a lot of institutional forms and political processes are still under direct, and somewhat violent confrontation in Venezuela, which has been consistent since before Chávez's election, but which has been taken to some extreme measures following Chávez's elections, culminating in the April 2002 coup against Chávez, but which certainly has been increasing since Maduro's election in 2014, and then re-appearing in the end of 2016 and the beginning of 2017. Politics is under direct confrontation in Venezuela, but the point is this is not new, and may in fact be a feature and not a bug. That is, if we want to take Chavismo at its word, then the politics of the revolution, may have a different form of politics embedded, whereas Levine identified the PFP as containing "opposition and conflict are tolerated, and indeed, built into the system, but opposition is constrained to work within a set of common procedures and forms"¹⁸⁴, the revolution may instead expect opposition to take a bigger role, because the goals of the revolution, while peaceful, can be expected to raise a different sort of opposition¹⁸⁵.

Let us continue with a brief overview of some of the other institutional forms, including *misiones*, community councils, and while stretching much beyond the cut-off of 2002, the emergence of communes as an institutional form is quite important.

Wilpert (2005) argued that the BR has had a "strong progressive, redistributive, and participatory democratic impulse"¹⁸⁶. With this in mind, Burbach and Piñero (2007), revealed "the core of the Venezuelan originality lies in its commitment to participatory democracy"¹⁸⁷. In Fernandes' 2007 claims that "the ability of barrio women in Caracas to build local 'spaces' of political participation partly outside of state control" is crucial for the workings of this new system¹⁸⁸. In Gibbs' 2006 article, Gibbs identifies the importance of both health and education as integral parts of the "process of re-politicization...[in] the community" in Venezuela¹⁸⁹. As such, the next brief examination of emergent institutional forms with Misiones.

Misiones, mandated by the state, were also mandated with community planning, so that, e.g., *Barrio Adentro* ((literally: *Inside the neighbourhood*), the first *mision*, and one centred on health,) the communities and the doctors serving the communities would be able to make mutual decisions about the necessities and priorities. *Barrio Adentro* was a program wherein

¹⁷⁹ (Hawkins, Kirk A; David R. Hansen, 2006, 106-107).

¹⁸⁰ (Hawkins, Kirk A; David R. Hansen, 2006, 110-111).

¹⁸¹ (Hawkins, Kirk A; David R. Hansen, 2006, 120).

¹⁸² (Hawkins, Kirk A; David R. Hansen, 2006, 124).

¹⁸³ (Hawkins, Kirk A, 2010b, 46).

¹⁸⁴ (Levine, Daniel H, 1973, 8).

¹⁸⁵ Cite, (something from Chavismo)

¹⁸⁶ (Wilpert, Gregory, 2005, 7).

¹⁸⁷ (Burbach, Roger; Camila Piñero, 2007, 181).

¹⁸⁸ (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 97).

¹⁸⁹ (Gibbs, Terry, 2006, 269).

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doctors from Cuba were placed in communities wherein reasons of poverty or location diminished access to health care ¹⁹⁰. The doctors were given houses and offices in the communities.

Educational *misiones* soon appeared, and included a wide range of possibilities. Starting with a literacy program, (*Yo sí Puedo*- “Yes I Can”), based upon the Cuban-model literacy program, helped foster communities and individual capacities for education. By 2008, the Venezuelan government declared the country illiteracy free ¹⁹¹. Educational *misiones* were not limited to literacy, and included basic educational programmes that then reached from primary school all the way up to university programs. To begin, each community would offer the program that were most needed, before then offering more advanced programs. It appears that once someone participated in one *mision*, then they would participate in others, this was most apparent in the *misiones* surrounding education ¹⁹².

Other *misiones* include: work training (at first named *Mision Vuelvan Caras*, then renamed *Mision Che Guevara*); others include *Mision Mercal*, an attempt to directly distribute food and other subsistence items at little to no cost; *Guaircarpuro*, a *mision* directed towards the Indigenous of Venezuela; amongst several others types of specific decreed ¹⁹³. The point being that these *misiones* are supposed to be not simple neoliberal restructuring, but rather ways to break both the magical state and yet redistribute some of Venezuela’s wealth into social programs against austerity. As of the beginning of 2017, it appears that *misiones* are still going ¹⁹⁴. It is not that *misiones* supplanted the BCs, but the institutional form was completely different. For wherein BC were based on study, especially during the constitutional change, a *mision*’s structure can be found in both redistribution and community service, and supposedly also achieves a level of communal decision making that is absent in most other political processes. One thing to note, is that indeed all of this emphasis on community has brought to fore a very interesting fact, as Fernandes (2007) emphasizes women have tended to be on the forefront of these *misiones* ¹⁹⁵.

Just as precise dates for the phenomena of *Bolivarian circles* are difficult to nail down. Actual dates for community councils are difficult. Officially, the form of *community* councils can be traced to law of 2006 ¹⁹⁶. Nevertheless, Fernandes’ article suggests at least two cases of other previous community council style organizations, in the first instance, an example of PFP form in the “popular women’s circles” (*Círculos Femeninos Populares*) ¹⁹⁷, which were briefly successful, before ultimately failing, likely to the nature of the ways that PFP politics incorporated mass movements. Another example is the *Carretera Negra* (“black Highway”) part of La Vega, which had been self-organized throughout the 1970s and 1980s ¹⁹⁸, which implies that even before 1989, parts of Venezuela may have had some institutional forms in place that might have helped bring out the current forms. In another example, Bruce (2008) gives us the example of the *Galipan* Community Council that had existed even before the law was drafted ¹⁹⁹. Similarly, the *Consejos Locales de Planificación Pública* (CLPP- “Local Public Planning Councils”) were possibly the direct predecessor to community councils, as BCs would seem to have preceded the *misiones* ²⁰⁰. Burbach and Piñeiro (2007) illustrate that the CLPP’s never truly developed, and while they had some mobilization, the structure was itself underplanned

¹⁹⁰ (Hawkins, Kirk A, 2010a, 199, 200); (Gibbs, Terry, 2006, 271-275). {Penfold-Becerra, 2007#@72-79}; (Raby, D. L, 2006).

¹⁹¹ Although, Rodriguez (2008) and Clark (2009) disagree, Weisbrot (2009) concurs, illiteracy has been eliminated. Intriguingly some data suggests a lag and a rise in illiteracy in 2016.

¹⁹² (Hawkins, Kirk A, 2010b, 49-53).

¹⁹³ (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 46).

¹⁹⁴ See for today;; CITE; For 2010, see, CITE; for, 2006, see; (Gibbs, Terry, 2006). Gibbs’s outstanding 2006 piece gives us some tools to understand the relationship between the specific programmes and form of the *Misiones* (the local educative and community programs which provide free health care and education to the communities that lack these basic services) and the more general programme of participatory democracy (276–7). For Gibbs, as well, the BR embodies a grander project of redistribution (266). Why is this a reconsolidation?

¹⁹⁵ (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007)

¹⁹⁶ CITE

¹⁹⁷ (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 104).

¹⁹⁸ CITE Fernandes

¹⁹⁹ {Bruce, 2008#@153}.

²⁰⁰ (Burbach, Roger; Camila Piñeiro, 2007, 185); {Bruce, 2008#@156-158}.

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201.

Nevertheless, Hawkins (2010b) isolates some of the particularities of CC's.

In 2005, the government began creating a vast network of Communal Councils (Consejos Comunales). These are a new type of neighborhood association, tasked with combining and administering many of the above entities [Urban Land Committees – community organizations that legalize and help community members regulate their housing situation, Health Committees – the community organizations that oversee each community's administration of their Barrio Adentro program, Co-operatives and Bolivarian circles.] Each council is voluntarily constituted by up to four hundred families in a given community [in the urban area], which meet in a Citizens Assembly (Asamblea de Ciudadanos); the council proper is an executive committee selected by the assembly. The councils are not purely territorial, in that overlapping councils can exist in the same community.]²⁰²

The point being that as Tamara Pearson shows in the change of formalized quorum formation that occurred in 2009²⁰³.

One of the key changes is the new assembly quorum. Previously, there were no set quorums for assemblies (general meetings of the whole community, where all key decisions are made, that must then be implemented by the representatives). The only set quorum was of 20% of community residents for a constituting assembly, where representatives were first elected. 10% was needed for an initial assembly to elect the promoting team which would start off the process of setting up the communal council.

Now, an assembly must have 30% of community members at a first meeting, and if that fails, 20% at a second, in order to make any decision, including voting for representatives.

This is very important because it means that the assembly, or the general community, will have to play a much greater role in council life²⁰⁴.

The fine line is of course as this formalization is generated from the state, it would seem to be state-driven but what is the formalization? Is it the creation of officialism, or does it help foster different institutional structures? Pearson observes that while mandated by the state, the process itself does not appear to be controlled by the state. For the formal structure to work, the process cannot be top-down. Lopez (2008) points out that this was a necessary reform²⁰⁵. The point is not only is the law a tool for the state but according to Pearson the law is itself undergoing a shift.

This is important because, apart from reflecting the change in Venezuela, something very interesting is happening here, where laws are becoming something other than tools for lawyers, and something talked about not just in the court room, but on campus, the streets, the media, among the old and the young, the educated and less educated, the opposition, and even those who thought politics wasn't important.

Now, the laws are tools for raising awareness of people's rights, obligations and protagonist ability. Community council members feel a certain urgent need to know the law, and many will quote various articles from it when the relevant situation arises. So a reformed law means a re-reading, a reminder of elements forgotten, and a re-evaluation of how we are going.

"The law is a guide for the community in general, so the community knows its rights and obligations," said Lisbeida Rangel, a criminology student and culture committee spokesperson for communal council La Columna in central Merida, referring both to the law in general and the communal council law²⁰⁶.

That is, the very historically-instrumental way that states have shaped themselves through law and the structures of law, can also be used by the community against states through the community's own usage of the law. This *other* relation with law would seem to not be dissimilar with the relation of law that Wolin identifies the Athenian demos as having²⁰⁷. This would seem to be a key component of both Venezuela and Athens, and a positive difference from Canada and the US for contemporary Venezuela. And maybe this in itself is a good enough reason for the new constituent assembly that proposes to further reshape Venezuela²⁰⁸. Which of course is another degree of difference from Canada and the US as constituent

²⁰¹ CITE. Also two other committees, electrical/ land (Ciccariello-Maher, 2016#@35-36. (differences 2001/2005). Before arriving at the institutional forms of community councils, a few more antecedents are necessary

²⁰² (Hawkins, Kirk A, 2010b, 37).

²⁰³ Other rule changes included the following: Further rules include: revocation of spokespeople, ???, minimum number of families (200 urban, 10? Rural).

²⁰⁴ (Pearson, Tamara, 2009).

²⁰⁵ (Lopez Maya, Margarita, 2008, 168, 172-175, 178-179).

²⁰⁶ (Pearson, Tamara, 2009).

²⁰⁷ Wolin (1996b)'s whole identification of the process of democratization is key with the understanding of democratic constitutionalism, as a process where "...the evidence suggests that the demos was an active force in all of the reforms ["the fifth century democratization of the Athenian constitution"], exerting pressure, siding with one leader rather than another, and gradually extending its power by gaining access to existing institutions or by establishing new ones";(Wolin, Sheldon, 1996a, 41).

²⁰⁸ Maybe it is another distraction from Maduro, but maybe the people of Venezuela in 2017 would like to alter the political community shaped in 1999, it might work and it might not. We will have to see.

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assemblies have either never happened, or have been avoided as much as possible.

I am referring to 2017, because the curious failure and success of the last decade of the revolution are in large part truly due to the communal nature of the Venezuelan political community that has grown since 1989. Especially as the communal nature and its foundation in the poor, in women, in afro-Venezuelans, in indigenous-Venezuelans, in the youth, in the LGBTQ community, is relatively unknown, or is somehow dismissed. In some ways then, the communal nature of the changed political community would not seem so obvious, but thus far these forms are quite less well known outside of Venezuela, and moreover, would seem to be “underreported” even in Venezuela. Community councils have not only been increasingly nested and nestled in confederations of expanding federalism known as communes, which are the final organizational form examined here, and are arguably the most important form that has emerged in Venezuela, especially considering the institutional trajectory that has been undertaken. 2017, and the new constituent assembly, thus are the contemporary main test case for the new Venezuela, especially in regards to the new constituent assembly and how it may intend the shape of Venezuela. As much as the assembly will refocus protagonism, and ensure its continuity, the revolution may still succeed. If the sustained mobilization is lost, either through reactionary means by the counter-revolution (including, of course, segments of the state) or by the state for whatever reason breaking the emergent dual power situation, then any revolutionary measures (especially as undertaken by the masses in the creation and maintenance of the revolution through a constituent assembly) will be lost. A greater than slim chance remains that the masses are able to sustain their revolution, against both the state and the counter-revolution, then Chavismo and the Bolivarian Revolution will continue to succeed. In what I mean by sustained mobilization is insofar as the communes have emerged from the structure of community councils and are maintained by such an institution, than, the structure could be paradigmatic.

It is possible that the communes have “...emerged as a coordinating body for the nesting community councils”²⁰⁹. This shift to “a higher level of organization from a lower” might be “key towards understanding their importance” as a political form²¹⁰. Throughout the different forms, it is obvious that some form of a coordinating body is needed, and thus the need for broad coalitions fostered. Accordingly, even though only formally announced in 2007, communes had pre-existed due to the very nature of the development of the political communities identified throughout the period of reconsolidation, also due to the conservative nature of the state, by which I would also distinguish the aspects of the revolution that may have colonized the state, from truly conservative portions, there would also be a conservative aspect of even some of the most revolutionary and committed state actors, the balance of forces is a historically contingent balance, As of 2009, there were 184, with more under construction²¹¹. According to Ciccariello-Maher (2016),

If the state did not create the communes, what the state has done is legally recognize the existence of first the councils and later the communes, formalizing their structure—for better and for worse—and even encouraging their expansion. Some 45,000 communal councils exist today, many of which have been incorporated into the now more than 1,500 communes²¹².

The argument is not that communes are a perfect institutional form, but that they are unique, moreover indeed, there is an importance to communes, if they tie both coordination between different communities, alongside a drive towards production, then their uniqueness can only be highlighted here.

In order to trace out the reconsolidation of democracy, it is necessary to take a step back from the institutional forms and trace out several important features that cut across

²⁰⁹ (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 51). and see, (Susan Spronk, and Jeffery R. Webber. “Communal Power in Caracas.” Socialist Project EBulletin 382. Last Accessed, Sept.9 2010: <http://www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/382.php> July 2010). 103.

²¹⁰ MRP. And 104

²¹¹ (Pearson, Tamara, 2009).

²¹² (Ciccariello-Maher, George, 2016, 18-19).

Cite Ciccariello-Maher, and Azzellini, here, pages, and etc, C-m and something communes

Also work-bodies.

Nevertheless, there have been discussions about communal states and

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these forms to highlight what is peculiar. There are two reasons that this paper has been arguing for the reconsolidation of democracy after 1989. Firstly, “people have been mobilized who were not mobilized before”²¹³. First in historical comparison, the dis-organization of the masses afforded by the PFP was at first a mobilization of the people, but this inclusive popular mobilization slowed, especially as the institutional forms of the PFP failed the masses, as the mobilizations were into the accepted political parties²¹⁴. Nevertheless, after the *Caracazo*, and with the previously identified institutional forms, it is obvious that some “genuine popular interest and action” has been “generated”²¹⁵. If one wanted to use the term “organizational plurality” (definition?) then it is possible that the Bolivarian institutions are not plural²¹⁶, especially, as the opposition is disenfranchised from these organizations²¹⁷. However, *pace* Hawkins (2010b), there is a wider enfranchisement of the greater population of Venezuela, a plurality that was missing from the “exceptionalism” before 1989²¹⁸. Moreover, if one wanted to continue focusing on “plurality” there is also a plurality of organizations, both in types and in numbers. Nevertheless, in some ways the political community has shifted quite perceptively since 1998, but by 1989, the change had already accrued.

It is quite notable that in almost every example of organizational forms that reconsolidate democracy, “the sovereign body” of each organization is “the open assembly of members”²¹⁹. The “ultimate decision-making body is the general assembly”²²⁰, now it is true that the state, and other organizations, will sometimes impose themselves through top-down practices, but it is notable that the law remains in favour of the assemblies.

For an example of top-down organizational problems, see the following case-studies reconstituted from Fernandes (2007), these case studies will lead us into the development that Fernandes further reveals, the conscious struggle for “gender parity in public life”²²¹. :

Carlos, a representative of the Mayor's office, had been invited to the assembly to listen to the community's perspective... but Carlos's perspective provided a strong contrast to that of [the other men]... Carlos dominated the discussion, whereas [the other men]... held back so that others could speak. When women were invited to respond to particular points, Carlos interjected with his opinion. Following José Luis's incisive comment about the problems faced by single women in the barrios, Carlos responded, "I don't want to change the subject, but I can add the anecdote that they say in the home, when there are no men, women urinate standing up." This kind of crude joke, combined with Carlos's domineering presence provided an alternative pole to the kind of awareness and self-criticism that the male community activists present were trying to encourage²²².

...Orlando sought to raise an issue. He said that the previous day militants from the Chavista vanguard youth organization, Frente Francisco de Miranda, had stopped by the soup kitchen and demanded that the community activists put up a banner with the insignia of the Chavista mayor and a name taken from one of the founding heroes, such as Bolívar or Sucre... Gladys agreed with Freddy, saying. "If the militants from the Frente come by here again, tell them to come to the next assembly and put it to the community because that is who makes the decisions in this barrio"²²³.

Like Carlos from the mayor's office, the Frente Francisco Miranda represents a machistic conception of politics that marks the official sphere, or *oficalismo*²²⁴.

No process is perfect and there are certain tendencies here that are far from emancipatory. It can be argued, however, that the democratic nature of these movements attests to their emancipatory character²²⁵. Especially as this aforementioned *oficalismo*, also has its limits, especially as the community's own everyday life that has shifted towards communal aspects. What is truly ironic here too, is probably by the Miranda's organizational name, they probably thought their interventions as truly revolutionary, but by imposing over the community's own recognition of itself, the Miranda organization was displaying horrible techniques of

²¹³ (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 52).

²¹⁴ (Ellner, Steve, 2010a, 58, 62-63).

²¹⁵ (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 53).

²¹⁶ (Hawkins, Kirk A, 2010a, 190).

²¹⁷ (Hawkins, Kirk A, 2010a, 190).

²¹⁸ (Hawkins, Kirk A, 2010b, 31).

²¹⁹ (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 52).

²²⁰ (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 52).

²²¹ (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 55-57). This discussion is based off several case studies found in; (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 114-121).

²²² (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 118).

²²³ (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 120).

²²⁴ (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 120).

²²⁵ (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 118 + 120-121).

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organization, On the other hand, the community itself does display heroic techniques of organization, especially in regards to searching for “gender parity.”

Rather than replicating gender divisions in community organizing, with women doing the cooking and men discussing the finances, men and women should have equal participation in all aspects of community organizing²²⁶.

According to Osvaldo, people even joke about his presence as a man: “in the meetings we have a joke, a game that when they speak of *ellas* (those women) or *nosotras* (us women), I'm included. The women make fun of me: ‘well the Señora Osvalda...’” The jokes reveal the gendered nature of community work; like domestic chores, it is still assumed to be women's work. But the participation of men in community work is also changing perspectives about domestic responsibility. As Osvaldo said, “I don't feel bad because this is women's work, no, this is also men's work” (Mendoza 2006). The participation of men in the soup kitchen signals to other men that cooking and domestic work should be shared responsibilities²²⁷.

With this in mind, I would not want to overstress the idea, and obviously Venezuela has not eliminated male power. But some social transformation has been afforded quite materially in the revolution, for if other men of the Barrios share Freddy's sentiments that “if we are in this revolution, we have to break with the structures of power that are being generated in the home... structures of domination of men over women”²²⁸, and if they start acting like Osvaldo does, then the revolution can certainly be seen as having advanced. Women are still relegated to roles that are nurturing and caring, but not only are the women able to make the decisions about the community kitchen and other needs and not only are they expected to make the decisions, but moreover the men of the community have started consciously integrating themselves into what was once considered “women's only work”²²⁹

Only time will tell how effective these organizations will be. Indeed, Pearson illustrates the threshold that needs to be achieved and maintained:

A spokesperson for the Communal Council Colinas de la Dignidad (Hills of Dignity), Morelbis Aguiar, explained that a commune, which is made up of several communal councils, is local, community self-government, “where we, the people, we are the ones who decide what our community wants and what the improvements are that we want to work on in our area.”²³⁰

It is the focus on general assemblies and the importance of assemblies that points us to a reconsolidation. Moreover, Hawkins (2010b) reveals that there has been an increase for Venezuelans of participation²³¹. There have tended to be high density of mobilizations for most of the institutional forms post-*Caracazo*²³². Bolivarian circles, had approximately over two million participants²³³. “Some Misiones (Ribas and Robinson) had served around two million people in 2004, just one year after their creation²³⁴. Other Misiones, such as Mercal have a grand total of eight million users (while this includes repeat visits, it is still a high number)²³⁵. Co-operatives have included some 2.5 million people²³⁶.

In some ways, this reconsolidation of democracy is predicated on new forms of solidarity²³⁷. Piñeiro, (2009) indicates collective and social property are contradictions to private property²³⁸. For this reason, as Coronil and Skurski (1991) reveal that during the *Caracazo*,

²²⁶ (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 121).

²²⁷ (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 115).

²²⁸ (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 118).

²²⁹ (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 56-57) ; and Mohideen (2009) explains the concept, for example, in conversation, Maria Leon, the Minister of Women's Affairs in 2009 explains:

“Talking is not enough. Laws are not enough. Institutions are not enough. We need a cultural change in our views and outlook.” This required mobilizing women to become “a real force, a deterrent force, an army to combat violence against women and to change the notion of women as battered victims and weak human beings.” To mobilize women some 25,000 ‘points of encounter’ for women are being set up where women have easy access to information and services without cumbersome requirements and bureaucratic regulations. These 25,000 ‘points of encounter’ will consist of at least ten women, who will then organize more women to create “an army to combat violence against women ... the point is not only to decrease violence against women, but to eradicate it!”. {Moheideen, 2009#@132}.

²³⁰ (Pearson, Tamara, 2009).

²³¹ (Hawkins, Kirk A, 2010b, 60).

²³² {Ellner, “Decade” 17-18}.

²³³ (Hawkins, Kirk A; David R. Hansen, 2006, 103); (Hawkins, Kirk A, 2010a, 190).

²³⁴ (Hawkins, Kirk A, 2010a, 202).

²³⁵ (Hawkins, Kirk A, 2010a, 202).

²³⁶ (Piñeiro, Camila, 2009, 309-310).

²³⁷ See, e.g.,; {Ellner, “Decade” 16}.

²³⁸ CITE

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People exchanged among themselves what they had obtained in quantity and carved up the sides of beef and pork they had carried away. As a woman later approvingly observed, "Money was no longer important. In a matter of hours we went back to the age of barter"²³⁹.

Piñeiro does contend that attempts to create collective and social forms of property are currently happening in Venezuela²⁴⁰. While different forms have been tried and have disappeared, Hawkins & Hansen (2006) contend that people continue to participate even if the structure that they participated in is no more²⁴¹.

This reconsolidation also relies on the protagonism undertaken by Venezuelans which can most clearly be seen in the fervor of February 1989, and those undertaken in April 2002²⁴². In many ways, April 2002, and the counter-coup of the masses against the coup against Chávez is an even cleaner example of the protagonism of the masses than the *Caracazo*. Nevertheless, it is clear that the protagonism of the masses from the *Caracazo* to the April 2002 coup was against austerity and neo-liberalism. And this protagonism is certainly at the core of the reconsolidation, recall T. Barrios:

I said, "My God, is this what you feel when you fight for what is yours?" I went to Maracay in a car, I took a flag, and I said to the others, "My God, what am I doing?" I didn't recognize myself... This was all asleep within me... I got involved in this thing. And then I wanted to face the President himself, and tell him how things should be, you may want to do it this way, but I don't agree, that we should do it in this other way in order to achieve what we aim to do²⁴³

Consequently, although many participants in anti-coup activities were formally organized in the Bolivarian circles and thus pro-Chávez, many participants were there simply to protect the constitution and many were there for reasons unknown even to themselves. But the fact that they were there together allows us to begin to grasp the meaning of the word protagonism: soldiers and civilians, as well as previously mobilized and previously non-mobilized sectors of the population were fighting at the same time to regain their president and their constitution and to force the coup plotters to back down. The masses were the protagonists in the action of those days in April 2002 as much as, if not more than during the *Caracazo*. In both cases though, according to some theorists the masses were being uppity, but they were also resolute.

The other thread of protagonism that this paper has been highlighting is in the institutional forms that have preexisted their formal, legal variants. One example, not highlighted in the paper, is in the examples Worker takeovers, several times from 1989 onwards, have workers taken over workplaces long before their takeover has been legalized in the revolution, and at times, the takeover never was legalized. Nevertheless, these different levels of protagonisms point towards the specific feature of the Athenian revolution as Wolin (who himself quoting Apollodorus, 1996a) reveals: "The Athenian *demos* has supreme authority over all things in the *polis* and it is in its power to do whatever it wishes"²⁴⁴. This points to a different relationship between leader and led, as would appear that Chávez had. Recall T. Barrios' example again: "And then I wanted to face the President himself, and tell him how things should be, you may want to do it this way, but I don't agree, that we should do it in this other way in order to achieve what we aim to do"²⁴⁵. Notice the collective "we" with the collective aims, this is not simply a movement focused on one actor, and Chávez is a symbol. He was an important symbol, but the importance is as much, an aspect of the person from who the collective can meet, and who the collective can dictate terms to. T. Barrios would certainly seem to believe herself to be participating in a reconsolidated democracy, and while 2017 may seem longer than the decade since Fernandes' work was first published, it would appear that as Ciccariello-Maher (2007) suggest, that dual power of the people against both the state and society is part of the reconsolidation. Ciccariello-Maher suggests that

This distinction...does not dismiss constituted, institutional or illegal power from the outset, but instead subjects that power to revocation by the people ... and [ha]s arguably contributed significantly ... to the

²³⁹ (Coronil, Fernando; Julie Skurski, 1991, 316); (Lopez Maya, Margarita, 2003a, #119).

²⁴⁰ (Piñeiro, Camila, 2009, 330-332).

²⁴¹ (Hawkins, Kirk A; David R. Hansen, 2006, 124 + 108).

²⁴² (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 59); (Ciccariello-Maher, George, 2007, 51); (Lopez Maya, Margarita, 2008, 202).

²⁴³ (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 112).

²⁴⁴ (Gaster, Jeremiah, 2010b, 61); (Wolin, Sheldon, 1996a, 39).

²⁴⁵ (Fernandes, Sujatha, 2007, 112).

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construction of a serious dual power in Venezuela whose ethical-legal foundation is the constituent intervention of the masses²⁴⁶.

Venezuela since 1989, may truly be achieving what its previously “so-called” exceptional status would have afforded it. Since 1989, there has been a deep reconsolidation of Venezuela’s democracy, and it might be hard to fully bring the changes to light, but I believe that the pivot of 1989, and which still holds true in 2017, is the overarching phenomena of a social revolution²⁴⁷.

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²⁴⁶ (Ciccariello-Maher, George, 2007, 44).

²⁴⁷ End On:

Aristotle,
Huntington
Dahl
Wolin

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