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Police statecraft and post-property possibilities in the Weelaunee forest struggle

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ABSTRACT

In the Weelaunee forest of so-called Atlanta, Georgia, over three years of struggle unfolded in an effort to decide the future of police power. The development of a corporate-funded police militarization training facility known as “Cop City” has threatened to clear-cut over 300 acres of forest, devastating a predominantly Black neighborhood’s limited green space and protection from heat, floods, and pollution. A movement known as “Stop Cop City” and “Defend the Atlanta/Weelaunee Forest” used a diversity of protest tactics in an effort to defend the forest from Cop City’s construction. Drawing on autoethnographic research as a criminalized forest defender and discourse analysis of both government documents and the movement’s social history, I demonstrate the central role of police abolitionists’ protest tactics of socio-spatial property transgression and commoning – *post-property possibilities*. I argue that the state’s protection of police militarization infrastructure and harsh repression of forest defenders in response to the movement’s post-property possibilities is defined by a counterterrorism strategy of police state legitimization – *police statecraft*. As forest defenders aim to prefigure a world beyond police and ecological collapse, a sprouting police state in the wake of the 2020 George Floyd anti-police uprisings asserts authoritarian means to solidify its reign.

1. Introduction

“KASS!” I scurried to the front desk of the Cobb County jail booking room at the sound of my last name being called, flushed with hope. When your last name was called, it meant you were being processed – a shred of indication that the snail-paced wheels of the criminal punishment system were grinding towards resolution – towards the possibility of freedom.

I had been arrested near a protest where property destruction had occurred in just one act of dissent within a much larger struggle. The protest was held at the offices of Brasfield and Gorrie, the main contractor slated to clear-cut over 300 acres of the Weelaunee forest, where the Atlanta Police Foundation plans to build a \$120 million-dollar police militarization training facility. The plan for the facility – set to be built on a former plantation and prison farm in the unincorporated, predominantly Black neighborhoods of DeKalb County, Georgia – mirrors the mock cities built by the United States military in the 1960s in the wake of the civil rights movement. In these mock cities, police forces have historically tested and trained in increasingly militarized tactics of urban street protest repression (Pettengill, 2022; Schrader, 2024).

The mock city design of the facility has earned it the nickname “Cop

City” by its opponents. Due to DeKalb County’s unincorporated status, state funding and the land swap for the project was approved by the Atlanta City Council without the consent of DeKalb constituents. The destruction of the Weelaunee forest is predicted to increase already intensifying flooding, heat waves, pollution, and asthma rates due to the impacts of deforestation – forests prevent floods by absorbing excessive rainfall, provide cooler temperatures with shade, and purify air through photosynthesis. Cop City is also expected to increase police brutality by further militarizing police operations, and pollute the local South River watershed with excessive sediment runoff (Defend the Atlanta Forest, 2022).

Fierce resistance against Cop City has grown into a broad social movement to “Stop Cop City” and “Defend the Atlanta/Weelaunee Forest.” Protest tactics have remained diverse, including a forest occupation and eco-defense, legal battles waged by environmental advocacy organizations, public comments, mutual aid projects, sabotage of construction machinery, rallies, raves, info nights, and much more.

I am among the many forest defenders who traveled to Atlanta from across the country to join this movement. I was also among the first in the Weelaunee forest struggle to experience the state’s conflation of property transgression with terrorism – a tactic of state repression

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instigated by a coalition of corporations and the federal United States government to target radical environmental activists who primarily engaged in property transgressions as forms of eco-defense during the War on Terror (Pellow, 2014). Eco-defense includes a broad range of direct action tactics used to defend ecosystems and natural “resources.” These include direct defense of these spaces via blockades, confrontations with authorities, tree spiking, and more. The Stop Cop City movement grew in strength and numbers over the course of four years; Weelaunee forest defenders attribute the lengthy durability of forest occupation (sustained from 2021 to 2023) partially to concerted efforts to grow the encampment by affirming that “we are all forest defenders” (Anonymous, 2023a: n.p.), welcoming visitors during “weeks of action” (Anonymous, 2023b, pp. 1–2).

At the front desk of the jail booking room, the guard had been stone-faced yet nonchalant, handing me my bond paperwork. Staring desperately at my charges, I took several double takes: “Criminal Damage to Property - Felony.” “Terroristic Threats - Felony.” The police report was just as puzzling, weaving a narrative of graffiti and terror, my co-defendants and I caricatured at the center. Somehow, spray paint and disruption at an office building had been interpreted by the state as the ultimate politicized, lethal danger: terrorism.

My experience began a chain of repression escalation: forest defenders who might otherwise be accused of merely trespassing on the forest’s private property (despite being arrested on its public property) began to be arrested and charged under Georgia’s Domestic Terrorism statute. One forest defender camping on the public park side of the forest was killed by police, explained away by the state’s claims that they were a terrorist. Just being within the vicinity of acts of property transgression, like I had been, led to the killing, capture and long-term incarceration of forest defenders under the Domestic Terrorism statute. The movement has been slandered by police, politicians and prosecutors, who declare forest defenders’ acts of property destruction as “terrorism” in press conferences. Over a year after my arrest for allegedly protesting with the Stop Cop City movement, I was included in an indictment of 61 forest defenders on RICO (Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organizations) charges – an attempt by the state of Georgia to cast a social movement as a terrorist criminal organization and conspiracy.

I argue that Cop City and the repression against its opposition is indicative of what I call *police statecraft*: a type of state-building with a few distinct characteristics and processes culminating in a *police state*, a form of authoritarian governance wherein police hold outsized political power (Robinson, 2019). These include (1) the expansion of policing as a state institution, particularly the expansion of its capacity as a repressive force without popular consent; and (2) the use of authoritarian repressive force against those who dissent, or imagine abolitionist alternatives to the growing police state, to strong-arm legitimacy for said police state expansion – particularly when dissenters’ abolitionist alternatives create a stiff competition for legitimacy.

Police state power and its property, here, is slightly different from state power and property on their own. Cop City exemplifies the hegemonic growth of police power within the state, cementing a specific *police state power*. The property of Cop City exemplifies *police state property* – the infrastructure required for the expansion of police state power (codified by counterterrorism governance as “critical infrastructure”). The Cop City project is an attempt to squash dissent through brute force, through both the police militarization and urban warfare aims of the project itself, and the authoritarian repression wielded against those who oppose it. The state’s use of counterterrorism doctrine and statutes against property-transgressive acts of abolitionist protest signals a deeper project of solidifying and legitimating police state power.

I contend that police statecraft is a backlash against the threat of *post-property possibilities*: abolitionist alternatives which seek to “[desanctify] property as an abolitionist practice” (Dawson: 2022: title): the appropriation of space with the aim of cultivating social relations of

commoning instead of, and in opposition to, the commitment of policing as an institution to the protection of property (Walcott, 2021). As the larger police abolition movement in the US and its extension in the Stop Cop City movement has acted in defiance and desanctification of property to protest the expansion of police power (Kass & Dunlap, 2025), the state has responded using counterterrorism methods that protect police state property to solidify police state power. Forest defenders are being targeted for fighting Cop City with an explicitly property-transgressive abolitionist strategy inspired by the George Floyd uprisings of 2020, wielding a diversity of tactics which includes various forms of property transgression – intended to forge a commons as life-affirming alternatives to policing and forest grabbing (Walcott, 2021), including mutual aid survival networks, anti-repression infrastructures, and direct action preventing Cop City’s construction.

The article proceeds with a discussion of the research methodology, and an explanation of the relationship between property (transgression), counterterrorism, abolition, and statecraft. I then offer my analysis of field notes and movement documents, showing the property-transgressive and abolitionist character of the Stop Cop City movement, and how its practices of property transgression signify abolitionist *post-property possibilities*. Then, I analyze state and movement documentation of repression events against Stop Cop City, alongside state repression philosophies and tools. I show how police e-mails, warrants, bodycam footage, statutes, an indictment, and a counterterrorism manual reveal a strategy of *police statecraft*, wherein policing Cop City’s property comprises a counterterrorism-centered delegitimation campaign against the movement’s abolitionist alternatives to policing – an attempt to grow the political power of police, protect police state property, and legitimize a police state.

The case of Cop City, and the movement to stop it, sheds light on a number of dynamics that are critical to understand as fascism continues its rise in the US, particularly via increasing repression of dissent under the second Trump administration. First, it shows that the state appears to be responding to the nationwide outcry for police abolition in 2020 with the expansion of urban warfare training for police, its intention to physically repress uprisings for police abolition (and other struggles), and enforce this unpopular push for police expansion at seemingly any political cost. The result of its push for police expansion, police authoritarianism, and police legitimization is the entrenchment of a police state. Second, the Stop Cop City movement has used tactics and strategies of struggle against property – in the form of both policing and enclosure – that we must heed and learn from. The struggle shows that policing and enclosure are one in the same; the struggle against both must be abolitionist, and abolitionist struggle is property-transgressive. Both Cop City’s *police statecraft* and the movement’s *post-property possibilities* exemplify a post-2020 terrain of struggle over police power in the contemporary US.

2. Methodology: Militant autoethnography and insurgent knowledges

In this article, I analyze state repression against the Stop Cop City movement using a discourse analysis of various relevant government documents: the U.S. Army’s counterterrorism doctrine; e-mails, statements and legal documents made by politicians, prosecutors, and police; the Georgia Domestic Terrorism statute; arrest warrants of defendants; and the RICO indictment of 61 Stop Cop City activists (including myself). I also examine movement documentation of repression and property transgression in pamphlets, communiques, films, and writings, as well as my own participant observations and field notes grounded in “militant ethnography” (Juris, 2007). Militant ethnography describes a methodology rejecting objectivist epistemologies in favor of solidaristic action within struggles as a form of research.

Militant ethnography “deliberately blurs the distinction between research and political activism” (Apoifis, 2016: 5) and is akin to a practice of “militant anthropology” (Scheper-Hughes, 1995), in which

both political commitments and the trust, friendship, and connection that binds us researchers to our research participants as fellow humans form the ethical orientation required of us in doing research with people engaged in social movements. To do research with social movements requires not the “passive act which positions the anthropologist above and outside human events as a ‘neutral’ and ‘objective’ (i.e., un-committed) seeing I/eye,” [Scheper-Hughes \(1995: 419\)](#) asserts. Ethnographers, she contends, must adopt “the active voice ... position [ing] the anthropologist inside human events as a responsive, reflexive, and morally committed being, one who will ‘take sides’ and make judgments,” regardless of and in spite of the fiction of a possible (activist) ethnographic positionality of neutrality and objectivity.

Particularly in dangerous field sites in conflict zones, tailoring one’s research methodology to the field context is crucial for solidifying a reciprocal and ethical research practice. Following ethnographers who have confronted such sensitive methodological tailoring ([Howell, 1990](#); [Kovats-Bernat, 2002](#); [Nordstrom & Robben, 1997](#)), safety and security for all involved is a primary concern in designing my own research methodology: this includes carefully selected elements of (auto)ethnographic engagement and refusal, based on solidarity with the movement, the progression of criminal charges, and broader risk of further criminalization.

Since I was arrested at the start of my fieldwork with the movement, the research design was significantly influenced by ethics of researcher safety. This imperative only increased as repression against the movement escalated, and my charges were elevated by the RICO indictment. My arrest and indictment introduced new methodological challenges into my research: if I was arrested again while conducting further fieldwork on the ground, my bond could have been revoked, leading to incarceration until trial. A subpoena for information about others required by traditional ethnographic methods is also a risk, previously impacting researchers of radical environmental movements (see [Pellow, 2014](#)).

I have refused a large portion of my participant observation (and that which might be considered research as part of a “traditional” ethnography; see [Chennault & Sbicca, 2024](#)) to avoid criminal liability: for example, I have refused to collect interviews, private information, or any remotely identifying details in field notes. Yet my life’s subsumption by a highly political RICO prosecution as a defendant is a unique and important positionality for participant observation, particularly as it relates to tracking and experiencing state repression. The central premise of autoethnography is that this tacit experiential knowledge from the researchers’ own experiences generates data in and of itself. In my case, autoethnography allows me to draw deeply on my own experience of state repression and movement solidarity as a forest defender as a form of research, ethically illuminate tacit knowledge from the positionality of a defendant in a highly criminalized movement, and maintain solidaristic opacity by refusing data collection which could incriminate me or my codefendants and comrades.

Militant ethnography also prioritizes collaborations with movements to produce knowledge about them and in service of them ([Apoifis, 2017](#); [Dunlap & Correa-Arce, 2022](#); [Juris, 2007](#)). In my case, balancing this collaboration with avoiding criminalization necessitates significant reliance on the heavy documentation of this movement by its members, and treating documents produced by them as crucial forms of movement knowledge. It requires following the lead of movement documentation in its emphasis on exposing and analyzing state actions and state-generated documentation. An anarchist and abolitionist methodology emerges from centering the “insurgent knowledges” ([Mullenite, 2021](#), p. 207) contained within text-based communication within anarchist and abolitionist movements. At the same time, drawing significantly on publicly available documentation has an added benefit of evading potentially incriminating information gathering.

The research was creatively conducted, and “the field” creatively defined, within the bounds of these challenging methodological and ethical circumstances. Participant observation included time spent in

the forest encampment and at local demonstrations during the May 2022 week of action; remote jail, court, and legal support from Spring 2023 to present; organizing fundraising, educational, and other solidarity events related to the movement; regular communication and friendship with forest defenders in and around the encampment and anti-repression organizers; appearance at my and 60 others’ arraignment hearing in Fulton County Superior Court; 30 hours of incarceration in Cobb County jail; 30 hours of incarceration in Fulton County jail; and extensive collective defense organizing around legal, political, and media strategy since the RICO indictment became public in September 2023.

Field notes have been recorded in daily journals since the indictment, written by hand and safekept by trusted friends, and audio recorded in encrypted “Notes to Self” in the Signal messenger app on a burner phone. I have often refused to record field notes at all. Throughout these experiences and recordings spanning almost three years, I collected, read, re-read, and inductively coded both legal and movement documents for themes related to the repression I was experiencing and witnessing. Themes of property transgression as abolitionist struggle, and enforcement of property and police state power through counterterrorism, remained consistent and salient themes throughout the data collected.

3. Counterterrorism and counterinsurgency against social movements

Wars between rebellious movements and the state break out when unpopular policies and regimes foment rebellion. Counterinsurgency strategy was historically developed in the US military for use against target populations in foreign wars before it was brought home for use in domestic policing ([Light, 2003](#); [Schrader, 2019](#)). Counterinsurgency is defined as “military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency” ([FM 3-24, 2014: 1-2](#)). Primarily, counterinsurgency is a military strategy of combating rebellion that is, on its face, “nonmilitary and nonlethal” ([Kilcullen, 2010: 7](#)). Rather than attacking the rebellion directly, counterinsurgency focuses instead on the interconnectivity of the rebellion to the larger population and its grievances, and aims to enchant and convince the population of the state’s legitimacy in order to displace the legitimacy of the rebellion: “[l]egitimacy is the main objective” ([FM 3-24, 2014, 1–113](#)). Counterinsurgents see “enemy-focused strategy, which seeks to attack guerilla forces directly” (9) as counterproductive – it is labor and resource intensive, and alienating to the population, who may have their reasons for supporting the insurgent movement, and without whom the insurgency cannot survive.

Yet even as counterinsurgents seek to establish state legitimacy through “a combination of consent and coercion” ([FM 3-24, 2014: 37](#)), they also recognize that “killing and capturing insurgents will be necessary” (41), despite overwhelming use of coercion and violence characterizing “illegitimate states (sometimes called ‘police states’)” (37). Counterterrorism exemplifies a state legitimization strategy which, while often overlapping with counterinsurgency, primarily focuses on the use of brute and lethal force against rebellions rather than population enchantment. Within terrorism studies and among counterinsurgents, terrorism is thought to be a series of tactics within insurgencies consisting of isolated cells of radicals or individual radicals with nihilistic tendencies toward violent opposition to the state. Rather than being dependent on the masses as in a traditionally-conceived insurgency, terrorists are seen as marginal insurgent actors without legitimacy, thus unaffected by a counterinsurgent campaign for the population’s hearts and minds. The figure of “the terrorist” is “primarily of political and propaganda value” ([Kilcullen, 2010: 186](#)), serving as a legitimization device for counterinsurgency efforts without necessarily engaging the population in its typical process of coercive convincing. In contrast,

terrorists are seen as unrepresentative, aberrant individuals, misfits within society ... [t]errorists are criminals, whose methods and

objectives are equally unacceptable ... [t]he insurgency paradigm is quite different ... [w]e regard insurgents' methods as unacceptable, but their grievances are often seen as legitimate (Kilcullen, 2010: 186–187).

In counterterrorism, the othering of the target is of utmost importance. Rather than manifestations of popular discontent which must be addressed in order to win a war with an insurgency, simple law-enforcement approaches are prioritized to fight terrorism: the use of the criminal punishment system to isolate the target with the ultimate goal to “deny them freedom of movement and action” (Kilcullen, 2010: 187). In so doing, state legitimization is achieved through a heavier focus on solely isolating the perceived enemy of the state from the population.

Police repression against radical social movements and eco-defense campaigns using these strategies is not new. Harshly repressing anarchists and communists was common practice at the turn of the twentieth century. The 1960s saw a sharp increase in both social movements against racialized state terror, such as the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement, and corresponding repression via COINTELPRO (counter-intelligence program), in which the FBI infiltrated, surveilled, harassed, and disrupted movements in order to target and attack them directly (Churchill, 2002; Churchill and Vander Wall, 1992; Williams, 2015). Throughout the 1980s, RICO laws were used to suppress the Puerto Rican independence movement, Black radicals, and anti-imperialists (Berger, 2023). Recent studies of “corporate counter-insurgency” against land defenders and water protectors demonstrate collaborations between corporations and the state in both the “hearts and minds” approach to counterinsurgency’s population enchantment, manufacturing consent, social engineering, and combining these with repressive state violence (Brock and Dunlap, 2018; Dunlap & Correa-Arce, 2022; Brown, 2021; Granovsky-Larsen, 2023; Verweijen and Dunlap, 2021). The privatization of communally held land, and the use of mapping to maintain state legibility of property, remains a tool of colonialism and counterinsurgency used against land defenders in Oaxaca, Mexico (Dunlap & Correa-Arce, 2022). A systematic analysis of the use of COINTELPRO, corporate counterinsurgency, and techniques of colonial enclosure and counterinsurgency used specifically against the Stop Cop City movement exceeds the scope of this paper’s primary focus on the relationship between property and counterterrorism; nonetheless, such analysis remains critical for future research.

In contrast, the Atlanta Police Foundation and state actors pushing for the Cop City development have made remarkably few attempts to persuade the population to give their consent for the project. They have also appeared to have a difficult time infiltrating or dividing the movement, for reasons as diverse as the movement’s decentralized and fluid character, forest defenders’ strong bonds of trust and affinity, and a highly historically-aware security culture which together tend to prevent and evade known counterinsurgency tactics used against movements past and present.

The primary corporate and state approach to repression has been sheer authoritarian isolation and criminalization of forest defenders, and weaponizing rhetoric and strategy housed in counterterrorism manuals. Counterterrorism as lawfare has been a critical strategy used against forest defenders, particularly in the use of the RICO and Domestic Terrorism statutes and the RICO grand jury indictment as weapons of war between competing sides of the struggle for the Weelaunee forest. The words of General Frank Kitson (1971: 68) exemplify the state’s rationale for using counterterrorism as lawfare: “[t]he law should be used as just another weapon in the government’s arsenal, in which case it becomes little more than a propaganda cover for the disposal of unwanted members of the public.” The emerging police state legitimizes itself by using counterterrorism doctrine and law to isolate and criminalize those who disrupt the property of Cop City: its construction site, its contractors, its funders, and its supporters.

4. Critical geographies of property, commoning, and police abolition

Critical legal geographer Nicholas Blomley usefully names the relationship between property and its material practices of exclusion from space “the territory of property” (Blomley, 2016: title). He defines property as “an organized set of relations between people in regards to a valued resource” (Blomley, 2016, p. 593) and territory as “a bounded social space that inscribes powerful meanings – in particular relating to social access and exclusion – onto defined segments of the world” (594). Blomley’s application of territory to property demonstrates a productive set of practices and manifestations which organize the relations of property into power: property’s lived expulsions and integrations on behalf of power, manifested as their stakes and their consequences. Territory and property are “relational effects” (596); their co-constitution combines relations to a resource (such as land) and the structuring of those relations through “the work of classification, communication, and enforcement” (596–597) – the assignment, announcement, and assertion of property ownership, in which property’s relations are produced.

In the case of the Weelaunee forest, the territorialization of the old prison farm tract has taken place through a concealed land swap between the Atlanta City Council and the Atlanta Police Foundation (classification) and a counterterrorism strategy of repression in response to property-transgressive dissent against Cop City. This culminates in an overarching territorialization of property by and for a growing police state, in which the police’s role of protecting the property of that police state (Walcott, 2021; Williams, 2015) and the state legitimization strategy of counterterrorism converge: *police statecraft*.

The exclusion wrought by counterterrorism as a state legitimization strategy does the practical work of both statecraft and, in the construction and enforcement of the property-transgressive “eco-terrorist,” the practical work of property enclosure. Historically, radical environmentalists have been sorely de-legitimized as “eco-terrorists” not for harming living beings, but for their primary tactic of destroying or occupying property in defense of the commons. This counterterrorism campaign against eco-activists occurred in the midst of the War on Terror, growing the conflation of property destruction with terroristic threats to state sovereignty as whole (Best & Nocella, 2006; Del Gandio & Nocella, 2014; Loadenthal, 2013a, 2013b; Pellow, 2014). This is tied to radical environmentalism’s tactics of property transgression as “a threat to capital” – despite “not [being] a threat to life in the way that neo-Nazis, white supremacists, anti-abortion assassins, paramilitary militias, jihadists, and others are” (Loadenthal, 2018, p. 100).

To threaten property is to threaten the capitalist state. Indeed, practices of commoning have constituted a consistent thorn in the side of the state in their transformative power. After all, counterterrorism has historically been wielded by the state when its monopoly on legitimate violence has been sufficiently threatened (Loadenthal, 2014). So-called “eco-terrorism” has historically been treated no differently by the capitalist state: “The State recalls the millions of dollars lost on destroyed property and missed revenues, and it remembers its intended role as the protector of property rights. When a window is broken, a slaughterhouse burned, or a factory farm exposed, the State immediately imagines a constructed future where protestors reign” (Loadenthal, 2013b, p. 21). In the case of the Weelaunee forest struggle, this state-imagined “constructed future” is also a threat in its abolitionist character, wherein the community determines the fate of a forest, rather than an emergent police state.

Like the radical environmentalist movement repressed by the War on Terror, property transgressions (i.e. vandalism, arson, and forest occupation) are continually utilized as tactics of struggle for Earth liberation. Unlike them, however, Weelaunee forest defenders also wield property transgression as a form of abolitionist praxis: forging new “life-worlds” (Kass, 2025) where human and nonhuman life are protected, and property is not. In fact, the transgression of property as its destruction,

occupation, and communization is essential to police and state abolition itself (Dawson, 2022; James, 2005; Kass & Dunlap, 2025; Lang, 2022; Walcott, 2021), as is doing so in explicit connection with resisting the enclosure of land into property (Heynen & Ybarra, 2021; Walcott, 2021). Anarchist geographer Anthony Ince (2012) might call forest defenders' transgression and transformation of the emergent police state's territory of property "[a]narchist prefigurative politics," which "resides in the contestations and practices of everyday life, producing a revolutionary imagination that is rooted in process and becoming," ultimately "entwined in social relationships" (1654).

The sharing of resources, and simply caring for one another, defines the relational process of re-territorializing property into an anti-capitalist commons (Caffentzis, 2010; Blomley, 2008; Ince, 2012) among forest defenders. Such shared resources range from solidarity, friendship, food, tree saplings, bail funds, jail/court/legal support, music, fun, and much more. Tactics of commoning have also been conceptualized by abolitionist scholar Justin A. Lang (2022: n.p.) as a form of "*autonomous abolition*, which is aimed at building hyperlocal infrastructures as alternatives to the carceral state to sustain communities and resistance," which Lang (2022: n.p.) describes as including "mutual aid formations, survival programs, people's assemblies, [and] anti-repression formations."

Alongside resource sharing and care, the disruption of property relations has also included property destruction and occupation: a confrontational commoning inextricable from solidaristic resource sharing within the Weelaunee forest struggle. Lang (2022: n.p.) describes this concurrent strain of struggle as "*insurrectionary abolition*, which refers to direct action and confrontation with the state," consisting of "rioting, looting, attacking state structures, taking territory, [and] eviction defense." Both forms of abolition work together in their combined social and material transgression of property within the forest struggle, culminating in the prefiguration of abolition via the "ungovernable abolition geographies" of post-property possibilities (Kass & Dunlap, 2025). The possibility of police abolition posed by the struggle's tactics of property transgression is precisely what has motivated the emergent police state to attack it in an effort to preserve itself.

5. Post-property possibilities: property transgression as movement foundation

From the beginning of the Weelaunee forest struggle, property destruction, forest occupation, and forest defense from police and construction workers have been prominent tactics used to fend off deforestation for the construction of Cop City. These subversive elements of property transgression have initiated and animated the movement from its inception, stopping Cop City in partnership with state-sanctioned protest, such as public comments, rallies, information sessions, community events, and a referendum campaign. Beyond spatial forms of property transgression, commoning through a culture of care and resource-sharing helps to dismantle property's social relations of enclosure, individualism, and accumulation by dispossession (Blomley, 2008; Caffentzis, 2010; Harvey, 2004).

5.1. Property destruction, eco-defense, and pressure campaigns

In the first of several movement history pamphlets (Anonymous, 2022a), the anonymous author(s) sketch out a historical timeline of the movement's first year, from the spring of 2021 to the spring of 2022. Throughout this timeline, references are made to communiques claiming responsibility for acts of property destruction and eco-defense tactics and their coexistence alongside above-ground protest tactics. Notably, these divergent tactics tend not to be a source of in-fighting or disagreement within the movement; factions generally have not publicly condemned or denounced another faction or its tactics. "The sabotage [of property] occasioned no dismay among opponents of the development. Rather, because it occurred so early in the movement, this kind of

bold action became part of its genetic material" (22). In this struggle, property transgression is not only an accepted (and welcomed) part of the tactical and strategic landscape of the movement, but central to its power and character.

The movement was kicked off by an informational session about the project on May 15, 2021, and two days later, "tractors and excavators ... are vandalized. Their windows are broken, their tires cut, and they are set on fire" (15). Demonstrations and vandalism together begin to target the contractors and funders of the Cop City project in an effort to pressure them to drop their contracts and associations with Cop City (Anonymous, 2022a; Rose Warfare, 2022). And it works: Coca-Cola steps down from the Atlanta Police Foundation board in October 2021. Reeves Young, the contractor originally slated to build the development, drops their contract in April 2022.

On July 4, 2023, a communique posted to the Scenes from the Atlanta Forest blog included a video and report back from a demonstration at the home of a project manager from Atlas Technical Consultants, who is shown exclaiming to protestors "Atlas is no longer involved [with Cop City], because you guys are fucking nightmares and you broke all of our windows" (Scenes from the Atlanta Forest, 2023). After twelve Ernst Concrete trucks were burned in November 2023, the company instantly dropped their contract. As one tree sitter wrote in another movement pamphlet, "Every delay opens up more possibilities. Every contractor that backs away brings us closer to victory" (Anonymous, 2022b, p. 5). These pressure campaigns via direct actions spread to contractors and funders across the country: from the sabotage of Wells Fargo and Bank of America ATMs in Philadelphia to the broken and spray-painted windows of a Bank of America in the Twin Cities.

Eco-defense tactics (see Pellow, 2014) in defense of the Weelaunee forest have been another foundational feature of the movement, culminating in tree spiking, treehouses, and a nearly two-year-long protest encampment in the forest itself. Trees were spiked in 2021, and notices appeared to warn construction workers that cutting down spiked trees will put them and their equipment in danger and cause damage. Treehouses were built and occupied by January 2022 and grown into an encampment (Anonymous, 2022a). As the encampment grew, it included a kitchen with dishwashing infrastructure, dining area, free food and supplies, an always-burning sacred fire illuminating the pink pine-needled paths. On the public park side of the forest, incoming campers set up tents in small groups, tucked so deeply in the woods one had to make sure to demarcate identifying landmarks like grassy knolls, stream banks, or high-in-the-sky treehouses overhead, so as not to lose one's way (Field Notes, May 2022). Eco-defense involved property transgression in the form of trespassing and occupation, and in the physical and spatial defense of the forest itself: building and burning barricades to keep cops and construction workers out, and physically blocking construction by occupying the space.

5.2. Solidarity as property transgression: Post-property social relations

Barricading was also a relational process – nurturing life among one another became the prefigurative defense against the necropolitics of property and policing (Mbembe, 2003), actively creating the alternatives to the carceral state abolitionists envision. The occupation of the forest, teeming with sharing, fun, and life-giving infrastructure as it was for its almost two-year duration, transgressed property powerfully in its prefiguration of solidaristic social relations between humans and non-humans alike. This transgression of property by caring for one another and sharing resources is the antithesis of property as the privatized or state-owned "set of relations between people in regards to a valued resource" (Blomley, 2016, p. 593). Rather, the forest and its defenders dissolved property's relations into a shared reality of care, an interconnected love and empathy that defied enclosure. In the prefiguration of post-property possibilities, a tree sitter contends that

[T]his spirit, this forest, will never be able to be contained. Everywhere you look, the police are trying to shrink our worlds, shrink our lives. But we have chosen to say no. Our fight extends beyond the borders of this forest – it extends through our expression of collective and individual joy, incomprehensible to the narrow imaginations of the police and the ruling class they protect ... Falling in love with these woods has meant falling in love with one another and the possibilities of this world – a love that police will never understand, and therefore cannot crush (Anonymous, 2022b: 5).

Eco-defense merged with “disrespecting property as a long-standing practice of abolition” (Dawson, 2022, p. 319) in the community built by the encampment. This community materialized in a prefigurative re-territorialization of the forest property (Ince, 2012).

When the forest encampment ended, property transgression as solidarity only continued in the form of anti-repression infrastructure. Fundraisers were held and support crews were formed to aid efforts to bail out incarcerated forest defenders, pay their bills and commissary while they were inside, take care of their responsibilities on the outside, as well as support and communicate with employers and loved ones (Field Notes, 2023a, 2023b).

Atlanta jail support volunteer and anarchist writer Cindy Barukh Milstein (2024: 241) remarks that the Stop Cop City movement is characterized by its “shared culture of communal care,” noting that, despite serious state repression in the form of Domestic Terrorism and RICO charges in particular, “mourning ceremonies and communal rituals, in-person care clinics, mutual aid therapy and peer-to-peer emotional support, medicinal herbs, and various other healing arts have only multiplied” (240). They also describe how this culture of care extended to anti-repression workers themselves, such as jail support volunteers. Milstein (241) specifically describes a therapist’s offering of a communal processing space after watching distressing court hearings which “reaffirmed that we, too, as ‘solidarity workers’ were seen and appreciated” as one example, along with simply reaching out to the struggling. Shortly after my RICO indictment, I was a direct beneficiary of this culture of care in the form of Milstein herself literally “putting a consensual arm around [my] shoulder and encouraging [me] to breathe” (242) when we were together at an anarchist convergence in September 2023. This was just one of many acts of care that I have had the privilege of experiencing throughout a tumultuous time of political prosecution.

While incarcerated, co-defendants ourselves practiced this culture of care. The judge presiding over the RICO case did not sign consent bond¹ paperwork for defendants until our arraignment hearing on November 6, 2023. Once she had done so, she ordered defendants to turn ourselves in at the jail by ten the next morning. This ironically encouraged a collective turn-in, where the majority of defendants would be incarcerated together, enabling us to create a temporary space of life-giving solidarity within the confines of the jail and the cells in which we were held together (Kass, 2025).

Throughout the 30 hours spent behind bars before we were bailed out, us defendants on the AFAB² side of the jail found ways to help one another survive. We cheered one another on while having our mugshots and fingerprints taken, advised one another of our rights to refuse medical information collection, used our collective voices to shout at the guards to give us water and toilet paper when we were deprived of it. Knowing that we may be deprived of food (and ultimately we were), we stockpiled as many sandwiches as we could, ensuring that we could all eat. We played group games to make one another laugh and pass the time, led yoga sessions to shake off the stiffness of the holding cell’s metal benches and concrete floors, and shared a communal sweatshirt to

stave off the freezing temperatures. At night, we cuddled on the floor of the cell we were ordered to sleep in, holding one another so that as much of our bodies were enveloped in body heat as possible, allowing our bodies to relax enough for sleep. Black Covid masks repurposed as eye masks protected us well enough from the bright fluorescent lights, ever-buzzing above us. Upon our release, we were met by a jail vigil, where jail support volunteers offered pizza, cigarettes, rides, and hugs to defendants (Field Notes, 2023b). Later, the majority of defendants joined a Joint Defense Agreement (JDA), structuring a collective defense in which defense attorneys agree to collaborate on legal strategy, share discovery, and consider solidarity with the movement and legal outcomes for one another as a top priority in any legal decision-making.

5.3. “The end [police] state”: Police statecraft in the protection of property through counterterrorism

The police state perpetuated by Cop City’s project of militarization has been continuously protected by various state actors as “critical infrastructure” as defined by the Georgia Domestic Terrorism statute. In this way, counterterrorism tactics have been used to protect Cop City property on multiple occasions. The repressive counterterrorism tactics of criminalization and murder against forest defenders, in particular, form a strategy of police statecraft in response to both material and social forms of property transgression.

5.3.1. Terrorism and critical infrastructure

My arrest on May 12, 2022 marked the first codification of the state’s association of this movement’s property damage with terroristic threats. E-mails exchanged between public officials show that their conceptualization of movement members as “eco-terrorists,” based mainly on protestors’ destruction of property and trespassing, began just before this time. In these exchanges, a Homeland Security officer at the Atlanta Fire Department named Nicholas Golden alerted deputy chiefs at the Atlanta Fire Rescue Department (AFRD) about the movement in an e-mail sent on April 7, 2022:

A group of Eco terrorists are in strong opposition to the Police/ Fire Training academy being built and have committed several unlawful acts against the contractors building the training academy, as well as Blackhall Studios.³ So far the group has vandalized (Arson/break windows/bleach in fuel tank) 12 bulldozers on both the Key rd site and another Reeves Young construction site in Gainesville. The group has poured bleach in the fuel tanks of five pickup trucks belonging to Long Engineering that is performing the survey work for Key rd. Also, vandalized the Atlanta Police foundations office at 191 Peachtree by smashing windows and spray painting the wall. The group visited the Reeves Young construction office and got into physical altercations with employees at the office. Visited the CEO of Reeves Youngs home in Suwanee and hung sign age up in his backyard about the stop cop city movement. The group has been building tree houses and having weekly demonstrations at Key Rd to rally support for there cause ... The FBI is involved in the ongoing investigation into this group as the group has also vandalized a Blackhall Studios office in another state, and has national support (funding) from similar eco terrorism groups.

The “Homeland Security” section of the AFRD website states that the Homeland Security Unit (HSU) was created in response to “the [terrorist] attacks on 9/11,” collaborating with law enforcement agencies to “[assist] conducting Threat and Vulnerability Assessments (TVAs) to protect the city’s critical infrastructure and interests.” TVAs

¹ A consent bond is an arrangement of a defendant’s bond amount and conditions, agreed upon by their defense attorney and the prosecution.

² Assigned female at birth.

³ In addition to Cop City, the movement to defend the forest was also opposing a smaller part of the land swap, wherein some public park land has been devoted to the development of a movie studio. This article’s purposes are focused solely on the Cop City development.

are essential to counterterrorism doctrine (JP-1, 2013: 14), a process of state-building wherein counterterrorism officials “continually monitor progress toward accomplishing tasks, creating an effect, achieving an objective, attaining conditions relevant to the end state, or attaining the end state.” In the case of the AFRD-HSU, “the end state” largely includes “protect[ing] the city’s critical infrastructure and interests,” which the Georgia Domestic Terrorism statute (Georgia §16-11-220, 2022) later used against forest defenders defines as “publicly or privately owned facilities, systems, functions, or assets ... providing or distributing services for the benefit of the public,” in relation to the definition of Domestic Terrorism as

any felony violation of, or attempt to commit a felony violation of the laws of this state ... as part of a single unlawful act or a series of unlawful acts which ... disable or destroy critical infrastructure ... and is intended to:

- A. Intimidate the civilian population of this state or any of its political subdivisions;
- B. Alter, change, or coerce the policy of the government of this state or any of its political subdivisions by intimidation or coercion; or
- C. Affect the conduct of the government of this state or any of its political subdivisions by use of destructive devices, assassination, or kidnapping.

Returning to Nicholas Golden’s e-mail with this context in mind, it reveals the beginnings of an attempt by the state to conduct counterterrorism operations in defense of Cop City property, and the success of these operations reflecting a so-called “end state” (JP-1, 2013: 14) of stabilized property relations (and by extension, a stabilized police state legitimacy) on behalf of the police state expansion Cop City represents.

Golden’s e-mail assesses the perceived threat of eco-terrorism primarily through the lens of threats to “critical infrastructure” as defined by the Domestic Terrorism statute, listing incidences of property destruction to elucidate the threat: “the [eco-terrorist] group has vandalized (Arson/break windows/bleach in fuel tank) 12 bulldozers,” he specifies. “The group has poured bleach in the fuel tanks of five pickup trucks ... vandalized the Atlanta Police foundations office ... by smashing windows and spray painting the wall,” implying that Cop City and its property constitutes critical infrastructure “providing or distributing services for the benefit of the public” (Georgia §16-11-220, 2022) – an “end state” (J-1, 2013: 14) which views (and codifies) the expansion of a police state via Cop City as a beneficial “public service.”

Golden’s e-mail also points to property transgression in the form of trespassing or disrupting the norms and practices of various properties as indicative of a terroristic threat, particularly pointing to how forest defenders have “[v]isited the CEO of Reeves Youngs home in Suwanee and hung sign age up in his backyard about the stop cop city movement. The group has been building tree houses and having weekly demonstrations at Key Rd.” One visit involving “physical altercations with employees” is mentioned without specifying what these altercations entailed. The overwhelming focus of identifying and alerting law enforcement to the alleged eco-terrorism threat remains trained on both acts of property destruction and forest defenders’ occupation of the property of those implicated in the project, in order to achieve the political goal of stopping Cop City.

The application of the Georgia Domestic Terrorism statute against forest defenders codified the state’s heavy focus on property-transgression-as-terrorism in these initial e-mail exchanges. The first use of the statute against the movement occurred in mid-December 2022, during a two-day-long, multiagency police raid of the forest encampment wherein forest defenders occupying tree houses were forced to leave them at gunpoint after being targeted with tear gas and rubber bullets. Twelve forest defenders occupying the tree houses were arrested and charged with Domestic Terrorism. Yet as Marlon Kautz of the Atlanta Solidarity Fund clarified at a press conference, “these people

were not involved in threatening anybody. They were not involved in endangering anybody. They were sitting passively in trees, trying to express a political position” (Unicorn Riot, 2022). Such treatment by police was further confirmed by riot police surrounding the public park side of the forest in the wake of these arrests, and threatening park goers with being “in violation of the law,” according to one officer in a film recording by Unicorn Riot (2022). “Public property!” a park goer shouts in response, “We have a right to be here!”

In the arrestees’ criminal warrants – largely copied and pasted by their authors – arrestees are accused of merely “participating in actions as part of Defend the Atlanta Forest (DTAF), a group classified by the United States Department of Homeland Security as Domestic Violent Extremists,”⁴ which they overwhelmingly specify as “occupying a tree house,” “refusing to leave,” and “being located on the property” (Superior Court of DeKalb County, 2022). The Georgia Domestic Terrorism statute appears to have been applied to forest defenders on the basis of taking part in a social movement protesting the militarization of police using acts which transgress property, and doing so in a manner which protects the property of police militarization forces using counterterrorism tactics. This involved treating the civil disobedience tactic of occupying private and public property as a threat to be neutralized by counterterrorism efforts in order to discredit the movement and win police state legitimacy.

On January 18, 2023, another police raid on the forest encampment resulted in Domestic Terrorism charges, as well as the police execution of forest defender Manuel “Tortugueta” Paez Teran. The accusations of terrorism were based even more explicitly on criminal trespassing accusations, and the murder of Tortugueta based on questionable claims. The warrants for the January 18 arrestees appear to be another copy-paste of the warrants for December arrestees, accusing them of “participating in actions as part of Defend the Atlanta Forest (DTAF).” The majority of the January warrants specify the arrestees’ actions as terrorism for taking part in an abolitionist movement and trespassing, as well as mere presence on the property during Tortugueta’s police murder:

The accused affirmed their cooperation with DTAF by criminally trespassing on posted land ... Said accused is also a known members of a prison abolitionist movement. Said accused was also present on the property during the shooting of a State Trooper by an activist, which resulted In serious injury, and the subsequent shooting of said activist, resulting in death (Superior Court of DeKalb County, 2023).

The January 18 arrest warrants confirm the use of Cop City property protection as a form of counterterrorism by the state. So, too, does the murder of Tortugueta. One of the fundamental tactics of counterterrorism is direct attack, which includes “dismantling” the perceived terrorist organization: “[d]ismantling may include capturing or killing of remaining key personnel and neutralizing materiel essential to the organization’s terrorist capabilities” (JP 3–26, 2009: 13). Law enforcement perceived the forest defenders occupying the property as “key personnel” of a terrorist organization, and the arrest of these forest defenders was intended to have “[t]he effect of dismantling” the movement, which “may include dislocation, a shift of terrorist acts to another region or multiple dispersed locations” – that is to say, “capturing or killing” forest defenders at the location of the property, which has been protected at all costs. The goal of dismantling is a state in which “[u]ltimately, terrorists [are] unable to acquire recruits or funding to maintain its organization, or members leave the organization for other pursuits,” breaking the movement to defend the forest by using brute force to protect Atlanta Police Foundation property.

The next round of arrests on Domestic Terrorism charges also occurred in heavy correspondence with property protection. On January

⁴ Notably, no such classification by the Department of Homeland Security of “Domestic Violent Extremists” exists.

21, 2023, a downtown march protesting the murder of Tortugueta drew a crowd which engaged in acts of property destruction. The windows of the Atlanta Police Foundation headquarters were smashed, and a police cruiser was set on fire. Six protestors were arrested, and charged with Domestic Terrorism, Arson, Interference with Government Property, and Criminal Damage to Property. Once again, Domestic Terrorism charges against forest defenders were justified based solely on acts of political property transgression: this time, instead of trespassing on the forest property, terrorism was defined as acts of property destruction and obstruction committed for political reasons ([Magistrate Court of Fulton County, 2023](#)).

The final round of Domestic Terrorism arrests occurred at a music festival raising awareness about the forest struggle on March 5, 2023. The music festival occurred on the public park side of the forest, a mile away from a protest on the private Cop City construction site, where a police vehicle was burned. Shortly thereafter, police raided the public park side of the forest, randomly arresting twenty-three music festival attendees and charging them all with Domestic Terrorism. According to the warrants, the overwhelming focus of the Domestic Terrorism charges rely on property transgressions such as “criminally trespassing onto private land” and the burning of machinery ([Magistrate Court of DeKalb County, 2023](#)). This focus on property-transgression-as-terrorism tracks directly with counterterrorism mechanisms of “critical infrastructure” definition and protection, particularly in pursuit of the state’s desired “end state” (JP-1, 2013: 14) in the face of threats to it.

5.4. Criminalizing solidarity and post-property social relations

The police state confirmed and codified the significance of post-property possibilities to thwarting its expansion efforts in its indictment of 61 Stop Cop City activists on criminal RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations) charges ([State of Georgia, 2023](#)). The narrative weaved by the prosecution claims that the movement is allegedly a terrorist criminal conspiracy to occupy the forested property where Cop City is slated to be built to prevent its construction, and doing so to “promote virulent anarchist ideals” such as “collectivism, mutualism/mutual aid, and social solidarity” (25) – precisely targeting the post-property social relations practiced by the movement for abolition as a whole ([Dawson, 2022](#)). The prosecution appears most concerned about these post-property “anarchist ideals” as a threat to state power, in that they

primarily [target] government because [anarchy] views government as unnecessarily oppressive. Instead of relying on a modicum of government structure, anarchy relies on human association instead of government to fulfill all human needs.

The indictment explicitly acknowledges that the movement challenges the state’s insistence that policing equates to public safety, and challenges the need for police to keep one another safe given that, according to (a) forest defender(s), “the only answer that [the state] can give to all the problems of the city is more police” ([Anonymous, 2022b](#), p. 11).

Linking the George Floyd protests to the forest struggle, the indictment claims that this apparently nationwide “anti-police violence” originated from acts of vandalism, arson, and the creation of autonomous zones in places where Black people were murdered by police, such as a Wendy’s restaurant in Georgia’s Fulton County. In pamphlets written about the Wendy’s occupation and other autonomous zones (i.e. [Anonymous, 2020a](#); [Anonymous, 2020b](#)), these spaces became sites of radical place-making for abolition, where mutual aid, mourning, and community care could take place in the wake of police murders ([Kass & Dunlap, 2025](#)).

The indictment continues: “an undercurrent of threatening, violent anti-police sentiment persisted with some individuals in the Atlanta area, including those that make up Defend the Atlanta Forest, and it remains as one of Defend the Atlanta Forest’s core driving motives”

(31–32). The indictment goes on to charge a vast majority of the defendants with violations of RICO based on their alleged involvement with the commission of property crimes, from trespassing to arson to vandalism to aiding and abetting these acts. Others are charged for supporting the movement through mutual aid, such as bailing out arrestees or buying food.

The Georgia state RICO statute itself has been weaponized against forest defenders through the indictment using broad statutory language. In the indictment, the prosecution has managed to widen the definition of a “criminal enterprise” and “conspiracy” to include a social movement. In a statement released by 12 of the 61 RICO defendants ([Anonymous, 2023a](#): n.p.), they analyze the prosecution’s abuse of the RICO statute’s vague language as antithetical to relational possibilities beyond property:

The fascism of the Georgia RICO statute lies in its enclosure of free social relations into its definition of an enterprise, to include ‘any unchartered union, association, or group of individuals associated in fact although not a legal entity.’ By this logic, a group of friends can be a criminal enterprise — or a group of strangers ... Anyone and anything ... can be demarcated as existing within the Georgia police state’s cage of ‘the enterprise’ — it just depends on what the state wishes to domesticate.

The indictment’s narrative demonstrates that the police and the state as a whole are indeed existentially threatened by property’s transgression and appropriation; enough to attempt to send 61 alleged challengers of the regime of property and policing to prison for up to 20 years.

6. Conclusion

This series of events, where property is enacted through violent exclusion ([Blomley, 2003](#)), and people destroy property in response – where George Floyd dared to use a counterfeit bill, the cops protected bodega property, and a police precinct got torched in response; where Rayshard Brooks dared to fall asleep, the cops protected Wendy’s property, and a Wendy’s got torched in response – these mediations and contestations of property narrated in the RICO indictment form the state’s battleground for the legitimacy of property and policing, and the battleground for property-transgressive forms of abolition (see [Chua, Linnemann, & Spade, 2024](#); [James, 2005](#); [Kass, 2025](#); [Kass & Dunlap, 2025](#); [Lang, 2022](#)) created by the Stop Cop City movement.

In response to what the state perceives as “a constructed future where protestors reign” ([Loadenthal, 2013b](#), p. 21), wherein people take it upon themselves to materially, spatially, and socially transgress property to forge an abolitionist commons ([Dawson, 2022](#); [Walcott, 2021](#)), the state has protected what it perceives and codifies as “critical infrastructure,” as defined by the Georgia Domestic Terrorism statute and counterterrorism operations. The state defines so-called critical infrastructure in accordance with police state infrastructure, which supports and materializes police state expansion and its associated enclosure of a commons.

This protection of Cop City property as “critical infrastructure” has been carried out as a counterterrorism strategy of state legitimization in the face of threats to infrastructure deemed “critical” for police state expansion. So-called “critical infrastructure” entailed the forest land slated for the construction of Cop City, police infrastructure set to help build it, and the property of its contractors, funders, and supporters. A police state has been further solidified in its harsh repression of dissent against police state infrastructure expansion using Domestic Terrorism charges and police murder – strategies designed to preserve state power by isolating and eliminating so-called “terroristic” threats to state legitimacy.

This harsh repression extends to the RICO indictment of forest defenders, which uses RICO as a counterterrorism tactic against both material property transgressions and post-property social relations. In

the police and prosecution's view, property transgressions are "threatening," "violent" "terrorism" in their relational and material reappropriation of property as acts of abolitionist protest and practice. The indictment's characterization of anti-police sentiment, tactics of property transgression, and solidaristic social relations weaved throughout the 2020 demonstrations and the Stop Cop City movement seeks to undermine the creative, liberatory character of these transgressions. The RICO indictment and Domestic Terrorism charges alike are attempting to crush and criminalize not only illegal property transgressions, but the prefiguration of post-property possibilities in life-affirming relations and infrastructures, or a police abolitionist praxis (Ince, 2012; Blomley, 2008; Chua, Linnemann, & Spade, 2024; Dawson, 2022; Kass, 2025; Kass & Dunlap, 2025).

Such possibilities were successfully forged by the movement's commoning tactics of property destruction, forest occupation, forest defense, and a culture of community care. These tactics offered prefigurations of a world without police, and particularly, a world without police state expansion and the enclosure required to accomplish it. These prefigurations protect the lives and survival of the commons – materially in defending a tract of forestland from destruction and preventing police state infrastructure expansion, and in establishing the social relations of solidarity which protect human and nonhuman life in the face of police state enclosure's repression and deadly threats. In the movement's December 2022 post-raid press conference, Kamau Franklin, an organizer with Atlanta Black activist collective Community Movement Builders, points out how "if we only focus on the destruction of property, and we don't focus on the destruction of people's lives, we are doing a favor for police" (Unicorn Riot, 2022). This statement points to property as a battleground for the (il)legitimacy of a growing police state in the Weelaunee forest – the state's outsized focus on property protection does "a favor for police" by expanding police state infrastructure and police state power.

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