Contested terrain and the distribution of social movements

Gino Canella

Abstract

This article proposes the distribution of social movements: a framework for analyzing how activists are navigating contemporary information systems to claim symbolic and political power. Drawing on ethnographic research with U.S. movements from 2015 to 2022, the article examines three distribution tactics: protest, earned and owned media, and community meetings. The study foregrounds the conflictual nature of political communication and argues that three primary antagonisms occur during the distribution of movements: (1) hegemonic: activists contest how their issues are framed; (2) legitimize: activists demand status as political actors; and (3) affective: activists make legible the emotions of their movements. Technological and political-economic changes are modifying the spatial dynamics of our political and information systems—influencing not only movements' communication tactics, but altering the very terrain of politics.

Keywords: protest; social movements; antagonism; Black Lives Matter; labor; political terrain; social media

Introduction

Social movements have long used a diversity of communication tactics—organizing protests, publishing newsletters and hosting community meetings. In recent years, though, technological and political-economic changes have complicated things, altering how movements publicize their demands and discuss their issues (Barassi, 2013). To understand these changes, this article proposes *the distribution of social movements*: a framework for analyzing the online and offline methods that contemporary movements are using to communicate with supporters, publics and institutions. Distribution is viewed as a series of social and material processes that occur through four interconnected dimensions: spatiotemporal, technical-behavioral, emotional, and normative (Steensen, Ferrer-Conill, & Peters, 2020).

Mapping distribution across these four dimensions requires interrogating the internal logics, affordances, and constraints of online and offline spaces. Within digital spaces, movements are using various platforms to connect with global audiences, boost their visibility, promote their fundraising efforts, and bolster their coalitional capacity (Díaz & Cacheda, 2016; Mundt et al., 2018). The political economy of these sites, however, gives many activists pause (Fuchs, 2012). From collecting users' personal data to running on algorithms that prioritize outrage

and spectacle, digital spaces are often ineffective venues in which to conduct long-term organizing (Tufecki, 2018; Wolfson, 2014).

Physical spaces likewise present a contradiction. While protests and demonstrations interrupt the movement of people and goods and draw a lot of attention, this attention is often fleeting and uneven (Chan & Lee, 1984; McLeod, 2007). Journalists cover protests, raising the movement's visibility and placing it on the public agenda, but this coverage often depicts protests as violent aberrations, devoid of context and detached from the underlying issues motivating the movement (Gamson, 1990; Gitlin, 1980; Koopmans, 2004).

This is especially true for labor movements and movements for racial justice. According to Martin (2019), coverage of labor issues shifted as the economics of the news industry collapsed. As newspaper circulations declined in the 1980s, Martin notes, publishers started pursuing middle class, suburban white readers. Labor coverage subsequently moved to the business section and workplace disputes were increasingly framed as disruptions for capital and inconveniences for consumers. Regarding movements for racial justice, researchers have found that news coverage marginalizes and delegitimizes movements against anti-Black racism more than movements for other issues, such as immigrants' rights, health, and the environment (Brown et al., 2019; Brown & Harlow, 2019).

Drawing on my work as an ethnographic filmmaker in the United States (U.S.) from 2015 to 2022, this article details how the movements I partnered with distributed their campaigns across various spaces and redrew the terrain of politics (Downey & Fenton, 2003; Caren, Andrews, & Lu, 2020). I argue that three primary antagonisms occur during the distribution of movements: (1) hegemonic: activists contest the framing of their issues; (2) legitimize: activists demand recognition as political actors; and (3) affective: activists make legible the emotions of their movements.

The article begins by reviewing literature on radical democracy, symbolic space, and networked society. I then discuss my methods and procedures, describing my filmmaking as militant ethnography. I argue that media production in partnership with movements provided me with opportunities to witness firsthand the affective dimension of distribution (Juris, 2007). I then offer the study's findings, organized by distribution tactic: protest, earned and owned media, and community meetings. The findings demonstrate how contemporary movements are leveraging numerous spaces simultaneously—using rallies, public meetings, posters, flyers, and multimedia—to antagonize publics and institutions, disrupt narratives about injustice, and alter the very terrain in which politics occurs.

Radical democracy, symbolic space, and networked society

Political analysts, journalists, and elected officials are expressing increasing alarm about the crises facing democracy.[1] Democracy is in peril, we hear, due to

[1] For reports from the nonprofit sector, see Freedom House (https://bit.ly/3Ni6b11) and Protect Democracy (https://bit.ly/3Nec1QH). For journalistic accounts, see the *New York Times*, "'A

rising authoritarianism, political polarization, and the erosion of civil discourse (Ercan & Gagnon, 2014). Rarely, however, do these discussions acknowledge the fact that democratic societies, by their nature, include adversarial and conflictual relations.

Political theorist Chantal Mouffe has argued that conflict is an indispensable feature of "radical democracy," noting that plurality, multiplicity, and struggle are "the *raison d'être of politics*" (1989, p. 41). While Mouffe acknowledges that "reciprocity and hostility" are inextricably linked (2005, p. 3), she makes a distinction between "antagonistic" and "agonistic" politics. Antagonistic politics occur between enemies, while agonistic politics occur among adversaries who operate according to a shared set of rules and within "a common symbolic space" (2005, p. 52). The agonistic form, Mouffe (1999) argues, emerges when existing power relations are transformed and a new hegemony is established.

Mouffe (2013) is primarily concerned with how radical politics counter the dominance of neoliberal capitalism. In contrast to scholars who theorize political change as *transformation* (Badiou, 2012; Hardt & Negri, 2012; Žižek, 2011) or as *reactivation* (Rancière, 1999; Wolin, 1996), Mouffe stresses the importance of institutions and understands political change as *democratic renewal* (see also: Tambakaki, 2017). Renewal, for Mouffe, requires radicalizing democracy from within and engaging with institutions to articulate a new common sense (2013, p. 65). Tilly also underscores the role of institutions, arguing that movements' claims become "contentious" once "governments become parties to the claims" (1997, p. 56). Conflict arises, he wrote, when those claims "bear on someone else's interests" (Tilly, 2008, p. 5).

To examine the conflictual nature of democracy, this article critiques two key aspects of Mouffe's agonistic framework: the first is the notion that a "new hegemony" can be established; the second is the idea that political adversaries operate within a "common symbolic space." Rather than viewing hegemony as something that is fixed or that can be won, I understand it as an ongoing process in which meanings are constantly defended, revised, and negotiated (Williams, 1977). Moreover, as technologies dramatically alter how information is read and distributed, we must reconsider how "symbolic space" is organized and contested (Asenbaum, 2018).

Building on the work of French sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1991), who theorized space as both a material field and a social practice, I recognize the hybridity of contemporary movements, examining the ways in which they use overlapping and multimodal communicative practices to dispute and expand symbolic spaces and redraw the political terrain (Boler and Nitsou 2014).

As movements contest their issues across numerous spaces, they engage in what Gramsci (1971) called the *war of position*: a period of political struggle in which movements disseminate their ideas and attempt to persuade the public.

Crisis Coming': The Twin Threats to American Democracy" (https://bit.ly/41e3lzK), and PBS's series "Democracy in Crisis" (https://bit.ly/3tazoUG). For scholarly literature, see Goodrich (2022).

Theorizing the war of position in the digital age, Castells (2011) argued that movements seek to gain a positional advantage by producing "mass self-communication." This is evident in the countless blogs, YouTube channels, and social media pages that activists and political actors publish. While these texts can spread individual members' stories and create "personal action frames" that animate supporters (Bennett & Segerberg 2012), Castells argued that, due to their horizontal nature and over-reliance on emotion, they are ineffective for movement building.

Dean (2009a) has similarly critiqued online activism, arguing that social media capture dissent and prioritize self-promotion over collective subjectivity. And because social media run on algorithms that curate information to match users' individual preferences and maximize engagement, they have contributed to the collapse of symbolic efficiency—a situation in which symbols and language mean everything and therefore nothing (Dean 2009b).

These dynamics are thus complicating the framing of social movements (Benford & Snow, 2000; Scheufele, 2009). Framing research has often focused on news coverage, analyzing the sources journalists rely on and the language they use when covering movements (Van Gorp, 2016). Carragee and Roefs (2004), however, urged scholars to move beyond framing as a storytelling device and to instead view it as a social and material process that occurs within the political economy of media.

By reviewing *the forms* of movements' claims (video, posters, speech) and *the spaces* in which they are expressed (in the streets, on social media, and interpersonally), this study analyzes how the political economy of media is affecting the war of position, redrawing the boundaries of symbolic and political terrain and placing democracy's antagonisms more clearly on display.

Method: activist filmmaking as militant ethnography

As a filmmaker and community-engaged researcher, I have created partnerships with numerous activist collectives and labor unions in the U.S. These partnerships have allowed me to study and participate in the distribution of social movements. This article draws on my experiences working with: Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Local 105 in Denver, Colorado; Black Lives Matter 5280, the Denver chapter of BLM; Black Lives Matter Boston; and the Massachusetts Nursing Association. Working with a variety of organizations—from trade unions to movements for racial justice—allowed me to examine the similarities and differences in their distribution tactics.

This study relies on 45 interviews with activists, organizers, and supporters of these groups; six community meetings I attended hosted by SEIU Local 105 and BLM5280; and a review of these groups' social media accounts. Studying these groups across online and offline spaces allowed me to observe how organizers are using analog and digital media to communicate with diverse publics across space and time (Nakamura, 2002). This method also allowed me to develop ethical partnerships with these groups and to test my initial assumptions about their

distribution strategies. I produced 12 documentary films in collaboration with these groups (ranging from 2 to 23 minutes in length). These films were published online in journalism outlets, shared on my and these groups' social media accounts, and viewed at community screenings. Publishing these films quickly online allowed these groups to promote their campaigns urgently and speak directly with their supporters. It also allowed me to gather feedback, build trust with my partners, and network with their members.

My filmmaking and research were informed by what Juris called "militant ethnography" (2007, p. 165). Rather than simply observing activism from a distance, militant ethnographers "become entangled with complex relations of power, and live the emotions associated with direct action organizing and activist networking" (p. 167). Militant ethnographers do not attempt to document and study movements as detached neutral observers; rather they critically reflect on their positionality to the groups they are working with and interrogate their responsibilities and commitments as scholars and social justice accomplices (Juris & Alex, 2013; Russell, 2015).

My positionality to the groups discussed here varied. I developed a close working relationship with SEIU Local 105, organizing a media workshop with the unions, co-producing a 23-minute documentary with the union's communication coordinator, and discussing regularly its campaigns and initiatives with members of the union's leadership. Due to my racial and gender identities, my partnerships with BLM5280 and BLM Boston are understood as an active supporter, rather than as a member. Finally, my partnership with the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) reflects a traditional researcher role: I documented the nurses' strike from the picket line, filming nurses outside the hospital and interviewing nurses and union organizers in the strike headquarters. I did not attend any organizing meetings hosted by the MNA. The contours of these partnerships affected the amount and quality of data I was able to gather. In situations where I had less access to core organizers and planning meetings, I relied more on the groups' public communication via social media, local journalism, and email newsletters.

I had two primary goals in developing these partnerships: first, I wanted to contribute to these groups' communication and organizing efforts, and second, I wanted to provide concrete analyses about their distribution strategies (Sztandara, 2021; Valenzuela-Fuentes, 2019). These partnerships offered me opportunities to observe, document, and contribute to these movements, and further understand how they are using various venues and multiple forms to reframe their issues and express their emotions (Papacharissi, 2016).

Finally, militant ethnography highlights the emotional and conflictual dimensions of distribution. Uribe and Rappaport (2011) argued that conflict and confrontation are necessary aspects of activist research, as they reveal the struggle over voice and power. Confrontation alters how we see the world: "It is in confrontation with people that both our knowledge and theirs will be validated, refined, and combined to produce concepts, methods, and procedures for activist

research (*investigación-acción*), ways of knowing and doing that are novel, creative, and, above all, transformative of reality" (pp. 28–29).

Interviews were transcribed and analyzed following a three-step method: (1) I conducted a close reading of the transcripts; (2) I did a second reading of the transcripts to uncover themes and patterns—in this case, the fight over hegemony, the demand for legitimacy, and the role of affect; (3) I conducted a third and final reading with these themes in mind (Emerson et al., 2011). Although the findings presented here are not generalizable to all movements, the study illuminates the complex and contradictory nature of distribution within networked society.

The distribution of movements

The movements I partnered with used three primary distribution tactics: protest, earned and owned media, and community meetings. Each tactic should not be viewed as separate or distinct, but rather as overlapping and complementary. Protests, for instance, are often filmed and shared online by journalists and activists, while public meetings provide organizers space to strategize about their campaigns and foster deeper relationships among their members and supporters. By using a variety of distribution tactics simultaneously across disparate spaces, these groups expanded the terrain of politics and demonstrated the antagonistic nature of meaning-making within networked society.

The streets as a distribution tactic

Protests disrupt how people move through space, and they alter the speed at which people and ideas spread (Harvey, 1989). Ron Ruggiero, president of SEIU Local 105, told me that protests "matters a lot" for the labor movement. "That's how progress gets made in this country," he said, "people coming together, making their voices heard." Denver city councilmember Paul Lopez, who has marched alongside service workers and spoken at Local 105's rallies, agreed. The labor movement's most iconic distribution tactic, he said, is "the picket line." It "create[s] a reflection. We create a surface people can see themselves in. And that's exactly why we do it. That's exactly why we've had the support we've had."[2] Creating reflections through public demonstration directs, or "choreographs" (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 4), public attention among seemingly dispersed publics. These actions serve to cohere fragmented publics and create opportunities for movements to identify their collective interests.

[2] I explained to participants that interviews served a dual purpose: they would be included in films published online and screened at community meetings and be included in research articles analyzing social movements. Participants provided verbal consent and were invited to review a draft of this article. Ruggiero interviewed by author, June 15, 2016; Lopez interviewed by author, July 19, 2017. Both interviews were conducted on camera for a documentary film.

Lopez and Ruggiero noted the labor movement's history of disrupting public spaces through protest, arguing that public assemblies both ground trade unions in the past and network workers in the present. Protests and picket lines bring people into direct contact with workers whose labor is often obscured, Lopez said. During a series of Justice 4 Janitors protests in 2016, Local 105 marched through downtown Denver's business district to make visible the workers who work in these building. During the march, passersby could not avoid the janitorial workers who clean the buildings overnight; the workers demanded recognition by chanting, dancing to a marching band, and waving signs and brooms.

Creating reflections, however, occasionally means confronting people who do not support the movement's claims. During a Local 105 protest on June 13, 2017, in which the union marched to demand improved healthcare coverage for service workers, a group of people on Denver's 16th Street Mall heckled to the protesters, "Get jobs!" Andy Jacob, political director of Local 105, responded, "We do." He told me later that comments like these are a major reason why unions need to be in the streets. He said the public viewed the Fight for $15 campaign unfavorably when SEIU helped to launch it in 2012; but, through a multimodal distribution strategy that combined public demonstrations, e-mail newsletters, and social media, the public over time came to view the demand favorably (Dunn, 2021).

Greg Douros, Local 105's chief of staff, told me that he is cautious about responding to detractors at protests. Often times, he said, their aim is to antagonize protesters, provoke a reaction, and film the altercation for social media. This spectacle fuels social media's cycle of outrage and furthers the narrative that protesters are violent and dangerous. Douros said that while the streets can be a space for sparking conversation, organizers must turn those sparks into dialogue through long-term organizing.

Lizeth Chacón, executive director of Colorado People's Alliance, an organization that has partnered with Local 105, said that protests create spaces for activists to refine their messaging. "Actions are a critical component for us to be able to win on the narrative fight," she said. Additionally, protests sustain a movement's passion. "We have to keep our community energized, and we have to keep pressure on our elected officials and the targets that we have."[3]

Organizers with BLM Boston affirmed this sentiment during its #SayHerName rally on July 4, 2020. In the midst of the racial justice uprisings following the murder of George Floyd, BLM Boston gathered to center and honor the work of Black women. Organizers highlighted the emotions of the moment by creating a festive and hopeful atmosphere—singing, dancing, and clapping to the beat of a drum. "Joy, alongside pain and suffering, is the way that our people have always

[3] Interview with author, August 30, 2017. Conducted on-camera for a documentary film.

survived," Karlene Griffiths Sekou, lead organizer with BLM Boston, said. "Joy is where we find our strength."[4]

I learned about the protest on BLM Boston's Facebook page. Organizers created an event listing for the march on Facebook, which included an email address for media inquires. I emailed the account two days prior to the rally to introduce myself and express my interest in filming the demonstration. Griffiths Sekou replied and shared information about the protest and how to contact her when I arrive. The short film I produced about the protest was published online by an alternative news weekly in Boston.[5]

Daunasia Yancey, the founder of BLM Boston, told me the protest was designed to create space for people to express their anger about the ongoing state violence being perpetrated against Black people. Organizers, however, were intentional about channeling people's anger into a productive critique of systemic inequality:

> We want to lift that anger, that rage, that comes out when we are frustrated with the constant state violence that plagues us… We protest out of love for each other and for ourselves. We want to center that because it is what will fuel us. Anger can burn you out. We want to be righteously angry, and we want to be holding each other in love. And we think that we can do both.[6]

In addition to lifting up the movement's emotions, BLM Boston also sought to disrupt the dominant framing of Independence Day. "Fourth of July is a false narrative," Griffiths Sekou said. "It's an imperialist, colonial narrative built on the back of stolen lands and on the backs of Indigenous peoples, built with extracted labor, from enslaved people from our ancestors. Independence Day was never independent for all of us." By marching through Boston on a holiday designed to celebrate the nation's "founding," activists challenged the symbolic efficiency of July 4th, challenging the pubic to ask: freedom and independence for whom?

Protest was one method through which BLM and trade unions reframed their issues, expressed their emotions, and built networks with their allies. Independent media and local news outlets were another important site.

[4] Interview with author, July 4, 2020. Conducted on-camera for short documentary about the protest.

[5] Available at: https://bit.ly/4080Ovs

[6] Interview with author, July 4, 2020. Conducted on-camera for short film about the protest.

Earned and owned media: local news and social media

News outlets can be ineffective venues for movements seeking to communicate with the public. Journalists "emphasize action rather than context" and often ignore the underlying motives animating activists (Jenkins, 1983, p. 546). As mentioned earlier, news outlets minimize Black activists' demands and protests for racial justice and report these movements as less important than other causes (Brown & Harlow, 2019; Mourão & Brown, 2022).

BLM5280 acknowledged this contradiction yet relied often on local news to distribute its campaigns. While petitioning to include the Office of the Independent Monitor—a panel to oversee police misconduct—into the Denver city charter, organizer Alex Landau spoke with local Fox affiliate KDVR-TV. Prior to the city council hearing on August 15, 2016, Landau stood on the steps of City Hall and explained to the reporter the importance of providing testimony at the hearing. Although he and BLM5280 could not control how the story was written, the interview gave him an opportunity to discuss the hearing with constituents who are likely outside the movement's core group of supporters and to frame the issue as law enforcement accountability.

In another instance, BLM5280 used local news, in concert with analog and digital media, to distribute its #ChangeTheNameStapleton campaign. The campaign, initially promoted with flyers placed on residents' cars and homes, was then expanded with updates shared on BLM5280's Facebook page, which raised the visibility of the campaign and earned BLM an appearance on a local radio show. The campaign sought to rename Stapleton, a neighborhood in the northwest section of Denver named for former Denver mayor Benjamin Stapleton who had known ties to the Ku Klux Klan.

Vince Bowen, a BLM5280 organizer, was interviewed by Colorado Public Radio journalist Andrea Dukakis. Dukakis began by asking, "Why make this campaign your first big initiative?" Bowen pushed back, saying, "Well, actually, what I would ask is why make this campaign the first big initiative in the media?" Dukakis then asked if BLM5280 launched the campaign to gain "media attention." Bowen replied:

> No. If you look at our flyer, we launched it to get folks activated. If you actually look at what the flyer says, it says: 'Did you know? Your neighborhood was named after Klansman #1128, Ben Stapleton.' And then on the back it says, 'Angry? Shocked? Then Act.' So, we're inviting people to start having a dialogue and talking about the implications of this because we think it is not a Black issue, it's not a white issue, it's an American issue. And we want everyone to be involved in doing the right thing and creating a community that lives up to the best that Denver has to offer. (quoted in Wolf, 2015)

Following this exchange, Bowen explained how the name Stapleton signifies the site of the former Stapleton International Airport, Denver's primary airport

from 1929 to 1995; however, Bowen said, it also symbolizes segregation and the historic intimidation of Black people. "[The name] represents a long legacy of racial exclusion, domestic terrorism, and lack of access to resources in pursuit of the full fruits of our democracy," Bowen told Dukakis in the interview. Bowen then explained that the campaign was designed to highlight three public policy areas affecting residents in the historically African American neighborhood of Park Hill, which borders Stapleton: (1) affordable housing; (2) access to healthy groceries, and (3) increased funding for public education. By drawing a link between the city's history of racial exclusion and the lack of material resources available to Black residents today, Bowen connected the dots between symbolic injustice and material inequities.

The interview reveals several things about BLM5280's distribution efforts. First, by challenging Dukakis's initial question about "media attention," Bowen rejected the host's framing and used the opportunity to discuss the unequal distribution of public resources. Second, BLM5280 used a combination of analog and digital media to provoke a reaction and gain attention for its campaign. This speaks to how organizers engaged with numerous constituents across a range of political terrains, both institutional and communal.

In another example, BLM5280 combined protest and local news to express support for Indigenous people protesting against the Dakota Access pipeline (DAPL) in Standing Rock, North Dakota. Locally, BLM5280 marched in Denver to support the Sioux Tribe's opposition to the pipeline. The October 8, 2016 protest was organized in part to oppose Columbus Day and the settler colonial logic behind the holiday. During the protest, BLM5280 organizers kept their distance from the center of the march, standing about 50 meters down the street and serving primarily in a supporting role. In this instance, BLM5280 used its name recognition and visibility to draw attention to the rally. Organizers told me later that environmental and racial justice are inextricably linked and that marching in the protest was an opportunity to collaborate with local activists and reframe hegemonic conceptions of land, racism, and citizenship.

BLM5280 continued its support for Indigenous rights the following month, traveling to Standing Rock in November 2016. Prior to the trip, BLM5280 solicited supplies and donations on its Facebook page—demonstrating how the group doesn't operate solely in the realm of ideas, but uses rhetoric and symbolic power to marshal material aid. Upon their return, organizers spoke with *Westword*, a Denver alt-weekly newspaper. Organizers explained how Indigenous land rights are connected to struggles for racial justice. "For us, the same law enforcement that's being employed to brutalize sovereign nations is simply an extension of the forces being used to brutalize and terrorize [Black] communities," a BLM5280 organizer said in the article. "We do not believe that the history of stolen lands is separated from the history of stolen labor, so while we're not centered in this fight, it is absolutely something we are proud to be a part of, because our histories are intertwined" (quoted in Walker, 2016, para. 11).

Through protest, crowdsourcing donations online, and local news outlets, BLM5280 bridged the ideological space between racial justice and Indigenous rights. BLM5280 organizers recognized that sharing material and symbolic resources was essential for building sustainable anti-capitalist and anti-colonial movements. While BLM's more sensational distribution tactics—shutting down bridges and disrupting politicians' speeches—antagonize publics and produce backlash, they generate publicity that the movement uses to challenge the status quo. As a BLM5280 organizer explained to the *Westword* journalist: "When we take the streets and disrupt traffic, when we disrupt conferences, and at that point, all of a sudden, people want to come to the table—if that's the order in which we need to move things, then we will continue to disrupt finances" (quoted in Walker, 2016, para. 47).

These campaigns—for the Independent Monitor, Stapleton, and Standing Rock—underscore the antagonistic and multi-sited nature of BLM5280's distribution strategy. Organizers navigated institutional and extra-institutional spaces to wage political struggle. In most instances, organizers did not engage with institutional actors (e.g., public officials and journalists) as adversaries who were operating according to a shared set of rules. Rather, they viewed them as impediments to their goals, opponents whose framings and rules needed to be rejected in order to redraw the symbolic and material terrain in which their issues existed.

SEIU Local 105 also used a combination of independent media and local news during its 2018 campaign at Denver International Airport: organizers discussed the campaign with Spanish-language news outlets in Colorado and created social media posts. On its Facebook page, Local 105 posted photos showing an airport worker being interviewed by Telemundo, with the caption:

> We're here at Denver International Airport today standing up and speaking out on behalf of airport security workers! They keep us all safe & deserve better wages & benefits. Right now, campaign coordinator Luis is talking to Telemundo Denver about the Airport Security Officers at DIA and their struggle for better wages and benefits. Sign our petition on behalf of airport workers: actionsprout.io/84C8F5 Learn more by following Airport Workers United. (SEIU Local 105, 2018)

Shortly after sharing the post, Local 105 livestreamed a video to its Facebook page showing workers marching through the airport (SEIU Local 105, 2018b). The video was captioned: "Every day, airport security workers keep us safe. It's past time to honor their request for fair pay and treatment! #StrongerTogether #PovertyDoesntFly." Independent media published on Facebook allowed Local 105 to publicize its campaign through a confrontational frame, something Telemundo and other local news outlets were unlikely to do. Video of workers confronting management to demand improved healthcare benefits with the

hashtag "#PovertyDoesntFly" showed how organizers exaggerated the spectacle of the action and leaned into the logic of social media.

I asked María Corral, Local 105's communications coordinator, how she navigates the contradictions of social media. She told me the union conducts workshops for its members to coach them on how to promote the union's campaigns and respond to negative comments. During one workshop, Corral said, members were met with a "Twitter storm" against the #Fightfor15, with numerous commenters attacking the campaign. Similar to the encounter with hecklers in the street, Corral encouraged members to exercise restraint. "Hopefully, if [social media] can promote the campaign that we're working on with our members and help boost the need for standards to equalize the inequity of incomes, then that's what we try to do," she said. Corral said Local 105 often leans on the "progressive community" in Denver to neutralize online hostility on the union's behalf. "[Our members] got on board and actually began balancing out the negative and the positive messages, which is awesome," she said.[7]

As movements use social media to reach diverse publics, combat negative or false framings of their issues, and organize supporters, they must also navigate increasingly consolidated and corporatized spaces. As wireless and broadband connectivity and online platforms are owned and managed by a few giant tech firms, activists must be aware of who has access to these spaces and how unaccountable private companies determine which expressions and viewpoints are permitted on their platforms. Movements for racial justice must be especially vigilant as Black activists are disproportionately subject to these platforms' surveillance mechanisms (Benjamin, 2019; Canella, 2018).

Despite these constraints, a union organizer in Denver who has partnered with Local 105 told me that mediating protest—through livestreaming videos and posting photos and news articles to social media—expands the labor movement's reach: "We're trying to bring [our issues] to the public realm so that it becomes a conversation for the public and we gain more momentum and support for the issues." She argued that media also make movements more accessible. "Everyone can't make it out to a direct action. People are going to see that on their Facebook, on their Twitter, on their social media feeds. They are going to see articles in the paper about that," she said. "It's really about really uplifting a conversation about change that a lot of folks feel is needed, and trying to really gain support and momentum for that change."[8]

Similar to Local 105 and BLM5280, the Massachusetts Nursing Association used a variety of distribution tactics throughout its 10-month strike at St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester, Massachusetts. Nurses went on strike in February 2021 against Tenet Healthcare, the owner of St. Vincent and the second largest private healthcare provider in the U.S. They were fighting for improved patient-to-staff ratios, among other issues. Nurses and MNA staff

[7] Interview with author, June 15, 2016

[8] Interview with author, July 19, 2017

used picketing, social media, and op-eds in local newspapers, among other methods, to communicate with the public throughout the strike.

I interviewed nurses during the strike for an 8-minute documentary that was published on *The Real News Network*, an independent journalism outlet. At the conclusion of the strike in January 2022, I conducted seven in-depth interviews with nurses and MNA staff for an oral history about the union's preparations for the strike, their communication strategies, and structural issues within the U.S. healthcare system. The timing of the strike—amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and discourses about essential and frontline workers—created favorable conditions for the strike, nurses said. Writing op-eds in local newspapers and posting on social media "gave a lot of positivity to the strikers," one nurse said. By creating their own media, nurses reframed stories about the strike published on Tenet Healthcare's Facebook page. One nurse said: "We don't have a multimillion-dollar propaganda effort to write all these articles… so, we had to make sure that we, at least, were fighting from our side saying, 'No, no, no, no, no, this is *not* how it is.'"[9] Several nurses said it was important to clarify and debunk news reports that portrayed the striking nurses in a negative light or misrepresented the conditions inside the hospital.

These rhetorical contests occurred often on social media. Carla LeBlanc, an MNA nurse I interviewed for the oral history, said: "When you'd see people on social media saying, 'These lazy nurses' or 'These bully nurses are loud mouth nurses, irresponsible, and they have an oath,' it was hard not to come back at that with anger and frustration." However, she responded to social media commenters "in a way that you're going to bring people back into hearing your side of the story." She asked people to hear the nurses' side and invited people she interacted with online to the picket line to have face-to-face conversations about patient safety and the conditions inside the hospital. In this instance, LeBlanc bridged disparate spaces, moving the MNA's claims from venues in which the nurses had little control (social media) to one in which they had more agency (the picket line). While social media presented challenges, it allowed for flexibility in messaging style. LeBlanc said she was "a little spicier" than her colleagues who chose to write op-eds, "so, it was almost like we were the good and evil of it. I could kind of be snarky on social media, and [my colleague] would be super sweet trying to educate people."[10]

Several nurses acknowledged that the MNA was not fully prepared to run a social media campaign against Tenet at the outset of the strike, nor did the union have the resources to do so. Several nurses said they were "caught off guard" in the early weeks of the strike, whereas Tenet was ready with marketing materials and press briefings. One nurse said it was disappointing to see negative comments and false information about the strike on social media, but her spirits

[9] Interview with author, January 17, 2022. Conducted on-camera for oral history about the strike.

[10] Interview with author, January 18, 2022. Conducted on-camera for oral history about the strike.

were uplifted when she walked the picket line and saw community members delivering donations, honking their horns, and walking alongside the nurses. MNA also received positive affirmation from pro-labor TikTok accounts and local activist groups who argued on behalf of the nurses.

Although social media, op-eds, and news coverage were important distribution tactics for the MNA, several nurses and union staffers stressed the importance of their existing relationships with faith-based groups, local labor unions, politicians, and grassroots organizations. These constituents were essential for supplementing the union's online activities and bridging the various political terrains in which this strike was fought.

Community meetings and media workshops

The activist groups I partnered with hosted numerous public gatherings. These events helped organizers strengthen the social relationships among members and supporters and contextualize their protests and social media activities. This section reviews two in-person gatherings hosted by SEIU Local 105 to review how these spaces were an integral part of the group's distribution efforts.

In 2018, I collaborated with Local 105 to organize a screening of *Radical Labor*, a documentary I co-produced with the union that focused on labor organizing in Colorado. I worked with María Corral, the union's communication coordinator, to identify panelists for a question-and-answer session at the screening. The panel consisted of Ruggiero, Local 105's president; a Local 105 field organizer; a labor and economics professor at the University of Denver; and an organizer with a grassroots organization in Boulder. I secured an auditorium in Boulder, Colorado, and worked with union organizers to promote the event via e-mail listservs, a Facebook event page, and flyers hung around the city of Boulder.

We partnered with a grassroots organization in Boulder to promote the event and foster new connections among activists in the area. Prior to the screening, an organizer from the group made an announcement about an environmental initiative his organization was working on, and he passed around a sign-up sheet to gather signatures and e-mail addresses. Following the announcement, I introduced the film and explained my motivations for making it—connecting fights for workers' rights with movements for racial justice.

After screening the film, I asked the panelists to sit at the front of the auditorium to share their reflections. I asked each panelist about racial and economic justice and about media's ability to divide publics or bring people together. The organizer with the grassroots organization spoke powerfully about the limits of media. She said that although media may introduce people to new concepts and ideas, face-to-face interactions are necessary to promote empathy and create inclusive and compassionate societies. She described her personal experiences as a queer person, explaining how LGBTQ rights have advanced, in part, because members of those communities were forced into direct contact with their friends and families. "We were right here," she said, placing her fingers an inch from

the tip of her nose. She described how U.S. schools and cities are more segregated now than they were in the 1960s, and that this should concern everyone fighting for justice.

Her comments resonated strongly with the audience, and they continue to inform my approach to activist filmmaking. Social media, film, and art will not in and of themselves secure justice; they can, however, carry affect, information, and perspectives across unfamiliar spaces and promote new understandings. For this to occur, organizers must move their claims off social media and into spaces where they can identify comrades with whom to build broad-based movements for change. Media can be a conversation-starter, but people represented in media make their issues tangible when they intervene directly in peoples' material and social lives.

After the screening, I secured distribution for the film on *Roar Magazine*, an online socialist magazine. *Roar* provides international perspectives on labor, racial justice, and activism, and I decided it would be an ideal venue for the film.[11] In addition to using the film to promote Local 105's organizing, I also sought to connect the union and its story with international labor movements. *Roar* shared the film on its social media accounts, and it has since been viewed in Australia, the Czech Republic, Spain, and India.

Another notable event for exploring how movements disseminate their politics across various spaces was a media workshop I co-organized with Local 105 on April 18, 2017. During a planning meeting for *Radical Labor*, Corral asked if I would lead a workshop with the union's members. She provided flexibility on the format, but suggested we screen a short film I produced about Melissa Benjamin, a home healthcare worker in Denver. She thought the film would be a helpful way to discuss how media connect personal stories to systemic injustices. Corral also suggested we conduct on-camera mock interviews with the attendees, so they could practice communicating their stories to journalists. The exercise asked participants to think through how to answer journalists' questions thoughtfully and succinctly. I provided the videos of the mock interviews to Corral, with transcripts and feedback, which Corral later shared with the workshop attendees.

Screening the short film about Melissa also served as an opportunity for me to gather feedback about my filmmaking with Local 105. After a brief introduction in which I explained how Melissa and I coordinated production of the film, we watched the documentary and opened the floor to comments. There were ten Local 105 members present and most were healthcare workers or organizers in the healthcare industry. Because many were familiar with the difficult work that home healthcare aides do, they were sympathetic to Melissa's story and appreciated how the film made visible the unseen labor of home care workers. However, not everyone reacted favorably. One home healthcare worker said the

[11] *Roar Magazine* was discontinued as an active publication in April 2022, but its archives remain online. *Radical Labor* is available here: https://roarmag.org/films/radical-labor-aligning-unions-streets/

film didn't accurately reflect the dynamics of home care. By filming Melissa adjusting her client's chair and brushing his teeth, she thought the film portrayed home care work as "easy." This did not match her experiences of being spit on and cursed at while providing care for clients.

Corral and other workshop attendees responded by saying that the purpose of the film was not to delve into the unfortunate aspects of home care work, but rather to humanize home care workers and connect individual workers to broader conversations about inequities in the healthcare system. Another participant noted how the film highlighted the intersectional nature of Local 105. This was accomplished, she said, when images of a Black Lives Matter sign were shown and when still photographs were included that depicted Black and Hispanic workers standing together at rallies. I discussed with workshop attendees my desire to balance the affective aspects of home care work with factual details about Denver's economy. One participant said she did not get any facts from the film, only emotion; others rejected this reading and pointed to statistics cited by Melissa about the cost of living.

Because there were conflicting reactions to the film, I asked Loree Lattik, a home care worker and organizer with Local 105, for her thoughts during her mock interview. "I could see and feel that Melissa was speaking from her heart, and that is her true and authentic story, very realistic," she said. "I remember in the video when she actually gave some affection to the person she was caring for, even though that person couldn't respond in kind." The film added depth to Melissa's story, Lattik said. "People have heard me talk about what I do and tell my story about the skills that I use and the duties that I do," she said. "But I've never been filmed or shown actually doing that work, and I think that makes a big difference. I think that does send a message in a different way."

Both events, the film screening and the workshop, provided Local 105 opportunities to refine its messaging and debate how its issues are being received. Reflecting on the criticisms about Melissa's film, perhaps information graphics could have more effectively conveyed cost-of-living data, or perhaps voiceover narration could have described the difficult aspects of home care work. But what the critiques clarify is how *form* and *venue* alter the delivery and reception of information. Film has its strengths and limitations, as do text and oral communication; and small in-person workshops have different social dynamics than social media. Local 105 acknowledged these strengths and limitations and created educational spaces across numerous terrains, allowing its members to be heard, seen and validated.

Conclusion

As publics clash rhetorically and physically, online and in the streets, they are not only framing their issues and demanding recognition as political actors, they are redefining the terrain of politics. The struggles over symbolic and political power reveal democracy's antagonisms, and represent the moments in which society's rules, resources, and beliefs are defined. By communicating

simultaneously across various terrains, contemporary movements are expanding the boundaries of politics and revising our conception of the political.

While Mouffe (2005) acknowledged that antagonistic relations cannot be completely eliminated in pluralistic democratic societies, this study has complicated her "agonistic" framework—which argues that political adversaries operate according to a shared set of rules and within a common symbolic space (p. 52). As governments manipulate online networks to claim information supremacy,[12] and as local and federal legislatures rewrite laws that criminalize dissent,[13] we need to ask: Which rules are shared? Which symbols are held in common, and by whom? To address these questions, this article has proposed the *distribution of movements*: a framework that examines how language and symbols are expressed and contested across space and time, and that foregrounds the conflictual and antagonistic nature of politics and meaning. Tracing the spatiotemporal dimension of distribution reveals the unequal power dynamics among people seeking to claim hegemonic control. Making issues legible and emotions visible across disparate information systems requires having the material resources needed to produce, publish and amplify information; it also requires navigating complex and often-fraught social and cultural dynamics among movements, publics, and institutions.

Each distribution tactic has its strengths and limitations: While social media provide movements opportunities to publicize their campaigns and solicit donations from global audiences, these sites are increasingly captured by private companies working in concert with governments to restrict speech deemed too deviant and outside the bounds of acceptable political debate. And while protests attract media attention and place movements' issues on the public agenda, this attention is fleeting and driven by spectacle devoid of context. Community meetings offer opportunities for organizers to foster deeper, more intentional dialogues among citizens, ones in which diverse groups of stakeholders can map out their goals and discuss their organizational capacity. But not everyone can attend these events and discussions at public meetings are often dominated by a few voices.

Contemporary movements are therefore developing hybrid distribution strategies to introduce new symbols into the public consciousness and re-position their members across ever-shifting political terrains. As technological and political-economic factors modify our information and political systems in

[12] During the 2020 U.S. presidential campaign, Twitter "blocked" news articles about then-presidential candidate Joe Biden's son from its platform; company executives said the decision was not due to pressure from Democrats or law enforcement. In 2021 U.S. government officials pressured Meta to "censor" certain COVID-19 content, including humor and satire, from its platforms. In August 2024 Kamala Harris's campaign for president edited published news headlines and descriptions in Google ads to make Harris appear more favorably in search results. Google said the practice did not violate its rules.

[13] For a detailed look at how local and federal legislatures across the U.S. are criminalizing dissent, see "The War on Protest is Here," by Adam Federman, April 17, 2024, *In These Times* magazine.

fundamental ways, movements are adapting and reshaping the terrain in which politics occurs.

Acknowledgement

Sincere thanks to the activists, trade unionists, and organizers who generously shared their time and insights with me. Your tireless fight for justice inspires me to believe that a better world is possible. I am also grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback on a previous version of this article and to Genevieve Ritchie for your support throughout the editing process.

References

Asenbaum, Hans. 2018. Cyborg activism: Exploring the reconfigurations of democratic subjectivity in Anonymous. *New Media & Society*, *20*(4): 1543–1563. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817699994.

Badiou, Alain. 2012. *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings*. New York and London: Verso.

Barassi, Veronica. 2013. Ethnographic cartographies: Social movements, alternative media and the spaces of networks. *Social Movement Studies*, *12*(1), 48–62. https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2012.650951.

Benford, Robert D., and David A. Snow. 2000. Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *26*(1), 611–639.

Benjamin, Ruha. 2019. Assessing risk, automating racism. *Science 366*(6464), 421–422. DOI:10.1126/science.aaz3873

Bennett, W. Lance, and Alexandra Segerberg. 2012. The logic of connective action. *Information, Communication & Society*, *15*(5), 739–68. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.670661.

Boler, Megan, and Christina Nitsou. 2014. "Women activists of Occupy Wall Street: Consciousness-raising and connective action in hybrid social movements" pp. 232—256 in *Cyberactivism on the Participatory Web* edited by Martha McCaughey. Routledge.

Brown, Danielle K., and Summer Harlow. 2019. Protests, media coverage, and a hierarchy of social struggle. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, *24*(4), 508–530. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161219853517.

Brown, Danielle K., Rachel R. Mourao, and George Sylvie. 2019. Martin to Brown: How time and platform impact coverage of the Black Lives Matter movement. *Journalism Practice*, *13*(4), 413–430. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2018.1507680.

Canella, Gino. 2018. Racialized surveillance: Activist media and the policing of Black bodies. *Communication, Culture and Critique*, *11*(3), 378–398, https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcy013.

Castells, Manuel. 2011. Network theory: A network theory of power. *International Journal of Communication*, *5*, 773–787.

Caren, Neal, Kenneth T. Andrews, and Todd Lu. 2020. Contemporary social movements in a hybrid media environment. *Annual Review of Sociology* 46, 443–65. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-121919-054627.

Carragee, Kevin M., and Wim Roefs. 2004. The neglect of power in recent framing research. *Journal of Communication*, *54*, 214–233. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2004.tb02625.x.

Chan, Joseph M., and C. C. Lee. 1984. "The journalistic paradigm on civil protests: A case study of Hong Kong" pp. 183–202 in *The News Media in National and International Conflict*, edited by Andrew Arno and Wimal Dissanayake. Boulder: Westview Press.

Dean, Jodi. 2009a. *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Dean, Jodi. 2009b. Politics without politics. *Parallax*, *15*(3), 20–36. https://doi.org/10.1080/13534640902982579.

Díaz, Javier Ramos, and Bruno González Cacheda. 2016. Financing social activism: Crowdfunding and advocatory social movement in Spain in times of crisis. Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Theory and Practice of Electronic Governance, ICEGOV '15-16, pp. 139–48. New York, NY, USA: Association for Computing Machinery.

Downey, John, and Natalie Fenton. 2003. New media, counter publicity and the public sphere. *New Media & Society*, *5*(2), 185–202. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444803005002003.

Dunn, Amina. 2021. Most Americans support a $15 federal minimum wage. *Pew Research Center*, April 22. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/22/most-americans-support-a-15-federal-minimum-wage/.

Emerson, Robert. M., Rachel I. Fretz and Linda L. Shaw. 2011. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes, Second Edition*. University of Chicago Press.

Ercan, Selen A., and Jean-Paul Gagnon. 2014. The crisis of democracy: Which crisis? Which democracy? *Democratic Theory*, *1*(2), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.3167/dt.2014.010201.

Fuchs, Christian. 2012. The political economy of privacy on Facebook. *Television & New Media*, *13*(2), 139–59. https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476411415699.

Gamson, William A. 1990. *The Strategy of Social Protest*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Gerbaudo, Paolo. 2012. *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism*. London, United Kingdom: Pluto Press.

Gitlin, Todd. 1980. *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Goodrich, Robert. 2022. *Democracy in Crisis: Weimar Germany, 1929-1932*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.

Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (Q. Hoare and G. N. Smith, Eds. and Trans.), London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. 2012. *Declaration*. New York: Argo-Navis Author Services.

Harvey, David. 1989. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.

Jenkins, J. Craig. 1983. Resource mobilization theory and the study of social movements. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *9*, 527–553. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.09.080183.002523.

Juris, Jeffrey S. 2007. "Practicing Militant Ethnography with the Movement for Global Resistance in Barcelona" pp. 164–176 in *Constituent Imagination* edited by Stephen Shukaitis, David Graeber, and Erika Biddle. Oakland: AK Press.

Juris, Jeffrey S., and Khasnabish Alex. (Eds.). (2013). *Insurgent Encounters: Transnational Activism, Ethnography, and the Political*. Duke University Press.

Koopmans, Ruud. 2004. Movements and media: Selection processes and evolutionary dynamics in the public sphere. *Theory and Society*, *33*, 367–391. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4144877.

Lefebvre, Henri. 1991. *The Production of Space* (trans. N Donaldson-Smith). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Martin, Christopher (2019). *No Longer Newsworthy: How the Mainstream Media Abandoned the Working Class*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.

Mourão, Rachel R., and Danielle K. Brown. 2022. Black Lives Matter coverage: How protest news frames and attitudinal change affect social media engagement. *Digital Journalism*, *10*(4), 626–46. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2021.1931900.

Mouffe, Chantal. 1989. Radical democracy: Modern or postmodern? (P. Holdengraber, Trans.) *Social Text*, *21*, 31–45.

Mouffe, Chantal. 1999. Deliberative democracy or agonistic pluralism? *Social Research*, *66*, 745–758.

Mouffe, Chantal. 2005. *On the Political*. New York and London: Routledge.

Mouffe, Chantal. 2013. *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. London: Verso.

Mundt, Marcia, Karen Ross, Charla M. Burnett. 2018. Scaling social movements through social media: The case of Black Lives Matter. *Social Media + Society*, *4*(4), https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118807911.

Papacharissi, Zizi. 2016. Affective publics and structures of storytelling: Sentiment, events and mediality. *Information, Communication & Society*, *19*, 307–324. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2015.1109697.

Rancière, Jacques. 1999. *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Trans. Rose J). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Russell, Bertie. 2015. Beyond activism/academia: Militant research and the radical climate and climate justice movement(s). *Area*, *47*(3), 222–229. https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12086.

Scheufele, Dietram A. 2009. Agenda-setting, priming, and framing revisited: Another look at cognitive effects of political communication. *Mass Communication and Society*, *3*, 297–316. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327825MCS0323_07.

SEIU Local 105. 2018. We're here at Denver International Airport today standing up and speaking out on behalf of airport security workers! Facebook, February 9. https://www.facebook.com/SEIULocal105/posts/1769979359726134:0.

SEIU Local 105. 2018b. Today at Denver International Airport airport security workers stood together for better wages, benefits, and working conditions. Facebook, February 9. https://www.facebook.com/SEIULocal105/videos/1769985796392157/

Sztandara, Magdalena. 2021. "We are fed up …Being research objects!" negotiating identities and solidarities in militant ethnography. *Human Affairs*, *31*(3), 262–275. https://doi.org/10.1515/humaff-2021-0022.

Steensen, Steen, Raul Ferrer-Conill, and Chris Peters. 2020. (Against a) theory of audience engagement with news. *Journalism Studies*, *21*(2), 1662–1680. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2020.1788414.

Tambakaki, Paulina. 2017. Agonism reloaded: Potentia, renewal and radical democracy. *Political Studies Review*, *15*(4), 577–88. https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929916635882.

Tilly, Charles. 1997. Contentious politics and social change. *African Studies*, *56*(1), 51–65. https://doi.org/10.1080/00020189708707860.

Tilly, Charles. 2008. *Contentious Performances*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tufecki, Zeynep. 2018. *Twitter and Tear Gas*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Uribe, Luis Guillermo Vasco, and Joanne Rappaport. 2011. Rethinking fieldwork and ethnographic writing. *Collaborative Anthropologies*, *4*(1), 18–66.

Valenzuela-Fuentes, Katia. 2019. Militant ethnography and autonomous politics in Latin America. *Qualitative Research*, *19*(6), 718–734. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794118787712.

Van Gorp, Baldwin. 2016. "Culture and Protest in Media Frames" pp. 75–90 in *Media and Revolt: Strategies and Performances From the 1960s to the Present* edited by Kathrin Fahlenbrach, Erling Siversten and Rolf Werenskjold. New York: Berghahn.

Walker, Chris. 2016. Black Lives Matter 5280 recaps trip to Standing Rock to oppose oil pipeline. *Westword*, 23 November. https://www.westword.com/news/black-lives-matter-5280-recaps-trip-to-standing-rock-to-oppose-oil-pipeline-8526506

Williams, Raymond. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Wolf, Stephanie. 2015. Why Black Lives Matter 5280 says Stapleton neighborhood should change name. *Colorado Public Radio*, 26 August. https://www.cpr.org/show-segment/why-black-lives-matter-5280-says-stapleton-neighborhood-should-change-name/

Wolfson, Todd. 2014. *Digital Rebellion: The Birth of the Cyber Left*. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press.

Wolin, S. S. (1996). "Fugitive Democracy" pp. 31–45 in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political* edited by Sheldon S. Benhabib Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2011. *Living in the End Times*. London and New York: Verso.

About the author

Gino Canella is a researcher, educator and documentary filmmaker. His work focuses on social movements, visual culture, and labor. He is the author of *Activist Media: Documenting Movements and Networked Solidarity* (Rutgers University Press, 2022). His latest film *Front Line*, which featured the historic nurses strike at St. Vincent Hospital, was published on *The Real News Network* and has screened at regional and international film festivals. He may be reached at ggcanella@gmail.com