

Protest Camps and Repertoires of Contention

From Occupy camps to Tahrir Square, from Britain's Balcombe to Turkey's Gezi Park, 'protest camping' has become a prominent feature of the post-2010 cycle of social movements. As a recurrent set of transnationally deployed tactics and practices, protest camping undoubtedly forms part of the contemporary repertoire of contention. Yet, while such camp occupations have increasingly gripped the public imagination, the phenomenon of protest camping is not new. There is a palpable danger of equating increased visibility with tactical novelty. Undoubtedly, the highly mediated Egyptian mobilisations in Tahrir Square in early 2011 along with the global Occupy mobilisations and Indignados occupations propelled the notion of the "protest camp" into the common lexicon. But while the idea of the "protest camp" may be new to some, the practice and performance of creating protest camps has a rich history which has evolved through multiple movements, from Anti-Apartheid to Anti-war. However, until recently, the history of the protest camp as part of the repertoire of social movements and as a site for the evolution of a social movement's repertoire has largely been confined to the histories of individual movements. Consequently, connections between movements, between camps and the significance of the protest camp itself have been overlooked.

In this research note we argue for the importance of studying protest camps in relation to social movements and the evolution of repertoires (Biggs 2013). Protest camps adapt infrastructures and practices from tent cities, festival cultures, squatting communities and land-based autonomous movements. But protest camps are not simply repertoires on their own. They also form spaces in which a variety of repertoires of contention are developed, tried and tested, diffused or sometimes dismissed. We thus argue that more attention should be given to the unique dynamics of protest camps, along with other place-based sites of ongoing protest and social reproduction, as they form key sites for the development and exchange of repertoires.

This intervention draws attention to the importance of place-based sites of ongoing protest and social reproduction for social movements (protest camps, squats, non-stop pickets, occupations, convergence centres). Such place-based sites are central to the transmission and adaptation of tactical repertoires. Place-based protest sites, like protest camps, provide insight into the dynamics of both successful

deployments of historical tactics (i.e. Greenham women's resurrection of suffragette dress, slogans, colours and nascent chain 'lock-ons'), as well as ineffective reproductions of tactics as the result of changing contexts. For example, the US anti-roads movement attempted to dig tunnels under houses marked for eviction in a practice borrowed from the Brits even though the ground soil could not support them (Laware 2002). Or, as an often discussed example, Occupiers' reliance on the 'people's mic' in Occupy camps which allowed amplified sound, even though the practice was invented to circumvent this ban (Feigenbaum, Frenzel and McCurdy 2013).

Building on the dual nature of the protest camp as part of contemporary movement's repertoire of contention and as a space of diverse repertoires, we begin by defining the concept of repertoires and of protest camps. Next, we outline the protest camp as an established component of the repertoire of contemporary movements. We organise this discussion following four interrelated infrastructures (*media & communication* infrastructures; *action* infrastructures; *governance* infrastructures; *re-creation*) that enable us to map and study the myriad of practices which comprise and sustain a protest camp using examples across a range of camps. Offering the space, time, architectures and objects for protesters to build relationships, craft actions, skill-share and host teach-ins, these place-based sites become hubs in the broader networked communication of social movements. As has been much discussed in existing literature, mainstream, movement and social media all shape and circulate tactical repertoires (Myers 2000, Biggs 2013, Pickerill et. al. 2013). Yet tactical innovations across media, governance, action and social reproduction so often arise from the space, extended temporality and distinct architectures and objects of the protest camp.

Theorising Repertoires and Protest Camps

The concept of repertoires of contention, first put forward by Charles Tilly (1978), offers an important theoretical tool for analysing the collection of strategies and tactics a given contextually-rooted social movement both knows how to do, and chooses to deploy. Building on Tilly's work, repertoire-drive research has, to date, examined the

tactics and strategies of specific movements such as the United Kingdom (Crossley 2002; Tilly 2004, 2005), Bahrain (Lawson 2004), India (Chowdhury 2013) and Latin America (Franklin 2013). In addition to studying geographically or culturally bound movements, the concept has also been used to theorise the rise of new forms of protest such as online direct action (Costanza Chock 2003; Rolfe 2005) and repertoires of cyber-protest (Van Laer and Van Aelst 2009). The tactic of the protest camp has largely been absent from this literature. Through this article, we hope to address this lacuna.

A protest camp maybe be defined as *a place-based social movement strategy that involves both acts of ongoing protest and acts of social reproduction needed to sustain daily life* (Feigenbaum, Frenzel and McCurdy 2013). Our definition allows for both social movements and campaigns that explicitly articulated a strategy or practice of 'protest camping' as well as place-based social movement actions which were labelled as 'protest camps' by mainstream media or movement discourses, even if they did not, at the time, articulate their practices in these words.

Reviewing the work of Tilly, Crossley (2002) comments on the importance of acknowledging the "social dynamics" of a repertoire as tied to a specific movement or mobilization even if it has a large general uptake. Protest camps must be viewed in a similar vein as they do not emerge as social movement practices out of nowhere. Rather, they arise out of and in relation to specific cultures, movements and struggles. To see protest camps as repertoires - then - is to point to how common features like the act of camping and occupying places, or the provision of care (broadly as social reproduction) and the facilitation of action are adapted in specific contexts. These specific contexts can be explored through a focus on the distinct, yet repeated infrastructures (and related practices) that comprise the life of a protest camp.

For a protest camp to emerge there needs to be a place where a camp can be erected, time for a camp to be built and become operations, and materials (tents, kitchen utensils, toilets) to make the camp function. Each protest camp is manifested in relation to distinct features of their place (i.e. national location, rural/urban, cement or grass, dry heat or wet snow, beside a beach or beside a cathedral); temporality (how long they last, how frequently they are evicted, what kinds of police violence and harassment they face, what the flow of campers and visitors through them are);

architectures and available objects (i.e. large marquees or abandoned barns, bbqs or food vendors, electricity generators or nearby cafes providing power). The way that both the camp evolves as a repertoire and that it becomes a place for the adaptation, experimentation and development of repertoires are entangled in these different aspects of each encampment.

The study of protest camps, through the lens of their infrastructures and practices, shows that there is a potentially much broader remit of the concept of repertoires. It highlights the importance of place, temporality, architectures and objects in understanding how repertoires travel and evolve. Because protest camps are places where more specific repertoires (actions, decisions making procedures etc.) are formed and invented tested, and modified, they often become sites from which repertoires are diffused through movements and across national borders via interpersonal exchange and mediated communication. In the next section we look first at the protest camp itself as a repertoire and then turn to look at the dual aspect of the protest camp as a place for the production and reproduction of repertoires. We argue that this dual nature of protest camps and place-based protest sites more broadly, necessitates a refined understanding of repertoires. We share McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly's (2001) view of repertoires as innovative and evolving and equally stress the importance of recognising how they are premeditated by available architectures and objects, by place and temporality.

The Protest Camp As A Repertoire

Protest camping, as a repertoire, has travelled across history, movements and national contexts. The connections between different camps did not start in 2011 with the occupation of Tahrir Square inspiring M15 and Occupy. Acts of camping and creating place-based sites of social reproduction and resistance can be found throughout history, with the Diggers often cited as a proto-form of today's tent encampments. Protest camps became increasingly popular with the wave of 'New Social Movements'. In 1969, inspired by the Bonus Army encampment of the early 1930s, Resurrection City was born. Many anti-apartheid solidarity protests in the 1970s and 1980s built shantytown encampments in efforts to draw attention to the inhumane

and unjust conditions of South African Apartheid. Also in the 1970s a new tactic of nuclear site occupations travelled from protest movements in the Rhine Valley to US anti nuclear activists. In the 1980s the idea of peace camps travelled from Greenham Common to several places around the world. In the 1990s European no border camps inspired the formation of large anti summit protests in camps and in the last decade these inspired the formation of climate camps, first in the UK and then across the world. There are more lineages, pointing to the establishment of protest camp as a repertoire of protest action in the last 40 years.

Of course not all movements use protest camps and the act of protest camping may be used in different ways. Yet post-2010 across a wide range of movements we do find that there are aspects of protest camps that travel, but others that do not. Thus, of interest to social movement scholars are mapping and understanding the connections – physical and mediated – across and between protest camps. What aspects of the protest camp have been inherited from past movements? What aspects have been innovated? How has the knowledge, experience and innovation pertaining to a protest camps been diffused across space and time? While social movement scholars have used this line of questioning to study social movements more broadly, it is equally important to make these connections across protest camps. Moreover, as we argue in the next section, protest camps are more than a tactic of contemporary movements. They must also be recognised as sites where movement repertoires are made, diffused, and modified.

The Protest Camp as a place for repertoire making and modelling

Protest camps are sites where people and ideas converge. They inherit successful repertoires and histories of practice, yet are also incubators of change and innovation for a movement's repertoire. As such, studying protest camps can offer social movement scholars a better understanding of how a movement's repertoire forms and becomes modified, as well shed light on the richness of practice found at protest camps. The study of protest camps requires an approach to the production and reproduction of repertoires through the entanglements of place, temporality and material architectures and objects. This approach must also understand the roles played by

protest camps (and related place-based protests) in the travel of repertoires—as both knowledge and tactics are bound up with physical objects. For example, successful general assembly meetings are reproduced as a repertoire through both the travel of decision-making practices (i.e. consensus, spokescouncils), as well as through the materials that support them (i.e. waterproof marquees – especially in rainy climates!).

To facilitate the study protest camps as assemblages of repertoires shaped by place, temporality and material architectures and objects, we suggest a theory and practice of ‘infrastructural analysis’. We use the term ‘infrastructure’ to refer to the organised services and facilities protest campers build for daily living. These structures, along with the practices attached to them, function together, to allow campers to disseminate information, distribute goods and provide services (such as nonviolence training, medical care and legal support). We differentiate between four protest camp infrastructures:

- *Media & communication* infrastructures and practices (media strategies, distribution networks, production techniques);
- *Action* infrastructures and practices (direct action tactics, police negotiations, legal aid, medical support, transportation networks);
- *Governance* infrastructures and practices (formal and informal decision-making processes); and
- *Re-creation* infrastructures and practices (food supply, shelter, sanitation, maintenance of communal and private space).

Thinking about these structures and operations as infrastructures provides a conceptual lens to disentangle, map and make sense of the ways in which protest campers develop and employ their repertoire of practices that negotiate (and fail to negotiate) ways of living and protesting together around and through the material objects, architectures and physical environments available to them. As these four dimensions interact, they enable and hinder each other, creating the distinct architecture of each protest camp (Frenzel, Feigenbaum and McCurdy 2013). In the next section we focus in on one of our four infrastructures, media and communications, to offer brief examples of how this infrastructural analysis can contribute to the study of repertoires. In particular we emphasise the need for heightened focus on place, temporality, material

architectures and objects to generate better understandings of the evolution and travel of repertoires.

Infrastructural Analysis: Media & communication

Since 2010 the rise in social media has sped up the protest cycle, turning both news media and activist media-making into 24/7 tasks. But for social media to be a successful repertoire for activists they need administrators, networks, content—and the often overlooked ingredient, electrical power. Beyond the infamous ‘human microphone’ of Occupy camps, most media and communications technologies depend on electricity in some form. It is the material architectures and objects like street lamps, generators and nearby cafes that make it possible for protesters to stay connected in an outdoor environment, especially during service provider blackouts like those used against protesters in Tahrir Square. Likewise, aspects of place like weather and topography also affects the ability to effectively engage communication technologies on a campsite. Blizzards and thunder storms can make working with electronic devices hazardous and challenging.

Re-situating these infrastructural features of place, temporality and materiality at the centre of our analysis can lead to new understanding of how repertoires are inherited, adapted, deployed and diffused. For example, at the Occupy camp in Anchorage, Alaska when the weather got too cold to use computers, livestreaming had to be stopped. In efforts to keep filming, occupiers created a system whereby they brought in propane heaters to keep the computer at a comfortable temperature. In New York City’s Occupy Wall Street a system was developed whereby, if it looked like rain, media team members would bundle up computer equipment in tarpaulin and donated rain ponchos, placing them carefully into a large skip that was also lined with waterproofs. Around Tahrir Square, protesters utilised a practice that travelled into protest camp repertoires through favelas and squats, tapping into the wires of street lamps to re-route electricity when they ran out of charge. In each of these examples, the evolution of repertoire is entangled with the materiality of place, architecture and objects.

While there is of course a temporality to all these actions, in some examples the temporal dimension of protest becomes particularly clear. In relation to media and communication infrastructures, we see this in the 'media hours' employed by some protest camps. For example, as part of a co-ordinated media effort, the 2007 Climate Camp restricted the hours that mainstream media could access the protest camp site. Drawing directly from a strategy used at the HoriZone protest camp in Scotland two years earlier, media were offered guided tours of the camp located on the edge of London's Heathrow Airport but only during times set out by protestors. This media policy established by protest campers became the object of harsh criticism from journalists for inhibiting free speech and impeding their right to report on activities as they so desired. Protest campers, by trying to control the time journalists could access the site, were attempting to find a workable solution to internal political divisions over media access and the demands of journalists. While problematic, the open hour solution used at Climate Camp is part of the repertoire of media practices designed specifically for protest camps and highlights a core tension of protest camps as both a symbolic site of media interest and representation and a place to live, plan and work without media interference.

The tension between the protest camps as a representational or media space and as a home "homeplace" (hooks 1990) is fundamental to the repertoire of media practices develop and deployed at the protest camp. With social media and livestreaming in post-2010 social movements making it even more difficult to 'control' the separation of activist and media space, the evolution of such place-based repertoires are key to developing new tactics. As such, to make sense of how repertoires take shape between media-makers and their 'tools' (computers, phones, internet networks) demands an analysis that looks at the dynamics of resources and roles in relation to these other material dimensions of place, temporality, architecture and objects. An infrastructural analysis illuminates these dynamics, and with them, increases our capacity to understand the evolution and travel of repertoires in post 2010 social movements.

Conclusion

The dual concept of repertoires we propose provides a framework to study how protest camps as a repertoire have developed over time and across movements. It also serves as a means to examine protest camps as sites for the production and reproduction of a variety of repertoires. The infrastructural analysis we have generated was designed to help social movement researchers disentangle the many repertoires observed at place-based sites of resistance like protest camps. This method of analysis allows one to comparatively study how different contexts shape the inheritance, deployment and diffusion of tactical repertoires. The four sets of infrastructures we propose are not discrete, nor are they the only way to think about how people come into operation together with the places, temporalities, material objects and architectures of a protest camp. Instead, they are meant to insist on the importance of place, temporality and materials in the ways we come to understand repertoires.

To date, literature on repertoires has remained focused on human relationships and resources at the expense of thinking about all the other environmental and architectural factors that shape strategies and tactics—from ground soil to freezing temperatures, from tarpaulins to tea. An infrastructural analysis emphasises the role these materials play in shaping the contexts of struggles through which repertoires manifest, resources are mobilised, and decisions are made. Infrastructural analysis thus offers the study of repertoires a lens through which to identify how repertoires are inherited and developed between protest camps, as well as how they are diffused from camps into broader struggles and movements. It is an effort to construct an analytic framework to better grasp the importance of place, temporality and materials in the ways repertoires evolve and travel, as well as how repertoires can become both reified and innovated.

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