

## Intersectional Technopolitics in Social Movement and Media Activism

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Emerging global social movement and media activist practices are integrating intersectional politics into technologically facilitated activism. Based on a multiyear empirical study, this article proposes a preliminary theoretical framework that maps 5 key dimensions of an emergent *intersectional technopolitics*: (1) intersectional anticapitalist politics enacted in meta-issue movements; (2) distributed online–offline media architectures and motility; (3) multiplicities of genres, forms, technologies, and spaces; (4) translocal solidarity economies and technologies; and (5) liberatory intersectional mechanisms of collective autonomy. The author argues that intersectional technopolitics is an innovative and complex set of coherent global social movement and media activist practices rooted in meta-issue movements integrated with transmedia digital technologies. The article concludes with a critical analysis of contradictions encountered by intersectional technopolitics activists as they interact with the structures of broader social movements, social media technologies, and societal hierarchies.

*Keywords: intersectionality, technopolitics, media activism, alternative media, social movements*

Digital media activism is emblematic of our time. From the beginnings of livestream and email activism by Indymedia in the global justice movement (GJM) two decades ago, through the digitally facilitated hybrid media protests of the squares in the antiausterity and Arab Spring waves of contention a decade ago, to the current wave of intersectional meta-issue contention of today, including #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter, digital media have increasingly provided a venue for global social movement and media activist participation.

This article addresses three gaps in digital media and social movement mobilization scholarship. First, although antiausterity movement scholars have investigated digitally facilitated activism in the squares (Brown, Feigenbaum, Frenzel, & McCurdy, 2017; Gerbaudo, 2012; Treré, Jeppesen, & Mattoni, 2017), only a few studies note that intersectional meta-issue groups have contributed critical discourses and organizing

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structures to these movements (Fuster Morell, 2012; Gámez Fuentes, 2015; Talcott & Collins, 2012). The growing meta-issue character of global social movements and media activism remains understudied.

Second, the scholarship suggests that traditional forms of collective action have been superseded by a fragmented individualistic connective action framework reliant on social media (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). However, this claim elides the histories of the collective actors adopting digital strategies (Lim, 2013; Sartoretto, 2016). While acknowledging the connective power of social media, we neglect collective organizing at our peril. This article critically analyzes media collectives and their integrated connective and collective actions at the confluence of digital technologies and grassroots mobilizations.

Third, intersectionality theory has long been used to study systems of identity, oppression, and exclusion (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991; Kaijser & Kronsell, 2013; Williamson, 2015), with more recent studies positing intersectionality as a politics of liberation (Breton, Jeppesen, Kruzynski, & Sarrasin, 2012a; Chun, Lipsitz, & Shin, 2013; Cruells & Ruiz Garcia, 2014; Laperrière & Lépinard, 2016) sometimes used in community media projects (Costanza-Chock, Schweidler, & Transformative Media Organizing Project, 2017). There is a gap in the literature, however, regarding intersectional digital media activist practices by grassroots collectives, which this article investigates.

These three gaps are addressed through an empirical study of the everyday practices of global meta-issue collective media projects at the crossroads of intersectionality and technopolitics.

Intersectionality can be defined as the ways "specific dimensions of inequality such as gender, [sex], social class, [race], or ethnicity may affect the reproduction of other dimensions" (Cruells & Ruiz Garcia, 2014, p. 4). Although it can be a way of articulating identity, intersectionality is increasingly defined as a system of interlocking oppressions structured by larger global systems, including state formations, colonialism, white supremacy, climate injustice, and neoliberal capitalism (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Razack, Thobani, & Smith, 2010). Intersectionality has played a key role in meta-issue media activism and interconnected social movements (Breton et al., 2012a; Laperrière & Lépinard, 2016; Williamson, 2015).

Technopolitics can be defined as "a sophisticated form of communicative action that is a complex blend of technological knowledge and digital expertise used for radical political purposes with the technology itself seen as a site of contestation" (Treré et al., 2017, p. 413). Caballero and Gravante (2017) envision technopolitics as entwined with democratization and the construction of future realities, "a transformative and decentralizing mediation grounded in the democracy of the code as a pooled construction of possible reality on the basis of digital culture and collective co-creation" (p. 2). While technopolitics has played a key role in Latin America and the Spanish Indignados (Caballero & Gravante, 2017; Toret et al., 2013; Treré et al., 2017), it also has a history in free culture movements associated with the GJM and beyond (Fuster Morell, 2012; Milberry & Anderson, 2009).

Bringing these two frameworks together, scholars have investigated the integration of technopolitics and intersectionality in media activist practices (Aikawa, Jeppesen, & Media Action Research Group, 2020; Cruells & Ruiz Garcia, 2014). Here, an empirically grounded theoretical framework is proposed that starts to map together key dimensions of media practices where activists have integrated

intersectionality into technopolitics. The methodology section, presented next, is followed by an articulation of six key dimensions of intersectional media practices, then seven key dimensions of technopolitical media practices, both substantiated with interview data. These frameworks are then mapped together along five integrated dimensions, and a discussion of some contradictions and challenges follows.

### **Methodology**

This intervention arises from a multiyear global study of intersectional movement and media activist projects in 13 countries. The research team, Media Action Research Group (MARG), combined participatory action research methods with integrated media activist activities. The latter included organizing and facilitating media activist workshops; participating in activist gatherings; hiring media activists to conduct research, produce media, design the website, write articles, and present at conferences; and contributing labor toward media activist and social movement groups, all on a global scale.

MARG integrated a range of social justice research methodologies, including participatory communications research (Phillips, 1997); militant activist research (Colectivo Situaciones, 2003; Gordon, 2008; Routledge, 2009); feminist community research (Jaggar, 2008); and prefigurative antiauthoritarian feminist participatory action research (Breton, Jeppesen, Kruzynski, & Sarrasin, 2012b). The common objective of these methods is to co-research alongside media activist, social movement, and/or community groups to document and critically reflect on their/our practices. Findings are shared in multiaudience, multidirectional knowledge exchanges among scholars and activists.

The research questions and processes in the MARG project were grounded in intersectionality theory and practice, with five pillars: intersectional feminism, antiracism, anticolonialism, anticapitalism, and LGBTQ+ liberation. Intersectionality provided the theoretical, practical, and methodological frameworks, structuring engagements with participants. Inclusion criteria were also intersectional: Participants self-identified as working within intersectional movement groups and media projects. This alignment of the research team and research participants provided a unique opportunity for critical research from within media movements, allowing for insights through proximity. Despite this solidarity model of research, to be of service to activists, a critical analysis of not just successes but also challenges and contradictions was undertaken. Interview questions covered three themes: intersectional anti-oppression practices with respect to internal power dynamics; material and immaterial resources; and collective movement memory.

The research included three phases that produced three data sets: (1) focus group workshops in six cities (2014–2015); (2) semistructured interviews with 89 research participants in 11 countries (2016–2017); and (3) knowledge mobilization workshops in five countries (2018). These three data sets were transcribed, translated as necessary, and coded in NVivo. The observations provided next are from aggregate data unless otherwise attributed to a specific media or movement project. Data collection was conducted by the MARG team; collaborative analysis of findings on different research questions has been published elsewhere. The analysis presented here is entirely the work of the author.

### Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality theory describes the complex function of multiple intersecting micro and macro systems of oppression. The term *intersectionality* was first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) in articulating a legal framework for considering anti-Black racism in the context of gender oppression, arguing that race and gender had intersectional constructions making Black women's oppression different from the oppression of Black men, on the one hand, and white<sup>2</sup> women on the other. However, the observation that oppressions of gender and race must be considered together can be dated much further back. For example, in 1851, Sojourner Truth's famous speech "Ain't I A Woman?" articulated the difference in social positions between white and Black women at the time and called for liberation inclusive of Black women, an early example of intersectional advocacy (Brah & Phoenix, 2013). In the early 1900s, Indigenous women noted the gendered, economic, and age-based effects of colonialism and capitalism, demanding that land be returned to them as Indigenous women (Clark, 2016). In the late 1900s, Black feminist scholars analyzed intersectionality beyond race and gender to include capitalism in what bell hooks (1981) labels white supremacist patriarchal capitalism. This triangulation has been extended to include intersections with queer embodiment (Rice et al., 2020), nation (Collins, 1998), decolonization (Clark, 2016), decolonizing antiracism (Dhamoon, 2015), transfeminism (Araneta & Fernández Garrido, 2016), and intersectional trans affinities (Ahmed, 2016), among others.

Intersectionality theory has thus grown from a grassroots theory, to a legal framework for intersectional identities (Crenshaw, 1991), to a broader theoretical perspective on interlocking systems of oppression (Razack et al., 2010). Critical race theorists Collins and Bilge (2016) offer the following extended definition:

Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. (p. 2)

Intersectionality theory can no longer be dismissed as mere identity politics. Rather, it is a key framework for challenging complex layers of social stratification in situations as divergent as the new social democracy policies in the European Union (La Barbera, 2017) and the film industry, as noted in a speech at the 2018 Oscars (Kornhaber, 2018).

Particularly in social movements and media activism, intersectionality has its own genealogies. Black feminist movements in the 1970s advocated for the rights of Black women as distinct from the demands of white women. For example, white women were vying to enter the workforce, whereas Black women had long been working to feed their families. Similarly, the white-dominated feminist movement

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<sup>2</sup> See Laws (2020) for an explanation of why this article capitalizes *Black* but not *white*.

was advocating for birth control and abortion rights, whereas racialized and Indigenous women were fighting for reproductive justice, to keep their children, and to end coercive sterilization programs (Stote, 2017). The Combahee River Collective (1977) produced a statement regarding “the historical reality of Afro-American women’s life-and-death struggle for survival and liberation” (para. 3), outlining a history of Black feminist activism. As such, intersectionality can be understood as a series of liberatory practices engaged by social movement and media projects dating back at least to the 1970s.

Another genealogy traces intersectional movements to anticapitalist and anarchist movements. The anticapitalist concerns of meta-issue movements are evident. Related anarchist movements are increasingly intersectional, with feminist, LGBTQ+,<sup>3</sup> and BIPOC<sup>4</sup> activists mobilizing in autonomous collectives. However, because movements tend to prioritize capital and state as axes of oppression, some anarchist groups may struggle to render movements more than superficially feminist, antiracist, anticolonial, queer, and so on (cf. Shannon, Rogue, Daring, & Volcano, 2013), enacting anti-oppression politics as a liberatory practice of intersectionality when possible (Breton et al., 2012a).

Despite its increasing importance, intersectionality tends to be neglected by scholarly accounts of media activism and protest movements that encode an undifferentiated universal subject in collective identity. The Indignados in Spain, YoSoy132 in Mexico, and the 99% in the global Occupy movement have all been identified as collective identities (Fuster Morell, 2012; Treré, 2015); but few studies have interrogated this to a greater level of granularity to examine how complex intersectional identities and subject positions might influence mobilization and media practices (Cruells & Ruiz Garcia, 2014; Talcott & Collins, 2012). However, the findings presented here reveal that intersectional subjectivities are being mobilized, and intersectional oppressions articulated and contested, by meta-issue media and movement activists.

Intersectionality—as a practice—is used in specific ways by media activist collectives: Projects typically foreground one particular issue while working from an intersectional perspective. Costanza-Chock and associates (2017) found, for example, that LGBTQ+ organizations received funding for a single focus, whereas the LGBTQ+ groups studied provided intersectional antiracist, antipoverty, youth, housing, and other services. Moreover, groups such as Undocuqueer (Salgado, 2012), Queer Undocumented Immigrant Project (Gentile & Salerno, 2019), and Ste-Emilie Skillshare (Jeppesen, Kruzynski, & Riot, 2016) have organized around intersectional representations of queer and trans people of color (QTPOC). Subjectivities and collectivities are internally intersectional rather than aspirationally coalitional.

The emergence of hashtag activism, including the digital intersectional transfeminism of #MeToo and #MosqueMeToo (Gash & Harding, 2018; Mendes, Ringrose, & Keller, 2018; Point, 2019) and the digital intersectional antiracism of #BlackLivesMatter and #SayHerName (Brown, Ray, Summers, & Fraistat, 2017; Crenshaw & Ritchie, 2015; Mundt, Ross, & Burnett, 2018; Williams, 2016), substantiates the claim that the collective action of meta-issue technopolitical movements is increasingly intersectional. Bilge (2016) cautions that intersectionality should not be superficial, an issue #MeToo has been accused of, given the

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<sup>3</sup> Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, and more.

<sup>4</sup> Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

predominance of white women and celebrities. However, the fact that #MeToo was started by African American Tarana Burke, who leads a sexual assault initiative called MeToo (without the #) ("Me Too," n.d.), demands a deeper analysis of the complexities of intersectional movements and media.

### Intersectional Dimensions

In light of these interwoven strands of intersectionality, six key dimensions characterizing intersectional media practices have been identified from the three data sets (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Key Dimensions of Intersectionality.**

Dimension	Intersectional Media Practices
1. anticapitalist collective subjects	against state-capital-communications complex; disavowal of the economic; contest digital divide; intersectional digital feminisms
2. intersectional counterpublics	online-offline counterpublics; antiracist; queer; trans and nonbinary genders; feminist; anticolonial; disability politics
3. translocal cartographies	refugee and (im)migrant justice; no border networks; queer immigrations; media transgress borders
4. participatory creation & ownership	collective self-ownership of cultural production; creation of self-owned technologies & infrastructures; creative experimentation
5. intersectional solidarity	intersectional solidarity economies; data justice; solidarity values in technological design; postscarcity; mutual aid
6. distributive horizontal rhizomes	distributive infrastructures of horizontality; rhizomatic distributive leadership; multipolitical architectures of practice

First, in the political economy of intersectional anticapitalism, media activists disavow the economic imperative of production, creating media as a labor of love and valuing cooperative creative expression over competitive capitalist accumulation. However, a disavowal of the economic is only possible with class privilege (Bourdieu, 1994), as noted by many media activists interviewed. Some undertook unpaid media labor with family financial support, while others required paid media labor for subsistence, an issue that played out along intersectional lines. Media activist projects facilitated participation opportunities for intersectional marginalized groups through practices including a QTPOC mentorship program, an Indigenous journalism fund, and media technology skillshare workshops for female and/or LGBTQ+ participants. Media activist projects challenged systemic oppressions by both representing intersectional political content and supporting intersectional practitioners.

Second, interviewees noted the importance of intersectional counterpublics, confirming how "statistics and surveys indicate that many more women, people of color, seniors and individuals from marginalized groups are becoming increasingly active" (Kahn & Kellner, 2007, p. 21) in media activism. For

example, in Athens, the intersectional feminist collective *Burnt Bras* developed both a blog and a Facebook page to disseminate theoretical analysis of intersectional meta-issue movements, illustrating how antiausterity and feminist issues articulate with antiracism, no-border networks, disability, and mental health to foster intersectional counterpublics. Similarly, *Groundwire* in Canada, *Smaschieramenti* in Italy, *Dotterbolaget* in Sweden, *Strike* in the UK, and *Midia Ninja* and *Capitolina* in Brazil, among others, organized as horizontal media collectives producing intersectional feminist media content and counterpublics. This is not to erase key differences in the local, historical, and national spaces they inhabit, but rather to suggest that they produce intersectional counterpublics in similar ways.

Third, translocal borderless digital activist cartographies support (im)migrant self-representations against capitalist and state austerity through digital technologies such as mesh networks and portable WiFi routers. They create no-border networks that support international migration, challenging global antimigration racialization structures. For example, a nonprofit media initiative in Athens called *Solomon* supports refugees and migrants through offering free four-month media production labs, with opportunities to report in the magazine and join the production team. Similarly, *Calais Migrant Solidarity* and *No Borders Iceland* activists created solidarity networks supporting migrant cross-border travel and refugee claims, integrating migrants into activist networks, sharing media skills and technologies, and supporting their self-articulated objectives. And in Greece, feminist groups provided print media about women's rights to female refugees, addressing gender in the context of migration. Thus, no-border politics intersects with racialization, social class, and gender through translocal cartographies that map global migration across international borders to intersectional meta-issue media and movements.

Fourth, participatory autonomous digital alternatives are key, as *Vlachokyriakos* and colleagues (2016) argue: "Clearly, there is a role that digital technology can play in reconfiguring citizen participation" that is attentive to "the various power relations at play" (p. 1097). This connects to the work of an interviewee with *Open Lab Athens* in the solidarity economy network, who designed and coded technologies based on horizontal, participatory values that amplified the distributive leadership of intersectional groups through technologies of horizontality. Recognizing that digital technologies are neither neutral nor instrumental, but encode political meanings, the solidarity network recoded digital technologies to increase participation, collaboration, and collective self-determination, consistent with intersectional anticapitalist solidarity economies.

Fifth, building solidarity economies based on postscarcity and mutual aid is linked to intersectional media content, structures, and digital technologies. An interviewee from *Open Lab Athens* noted that collectives organized using solidarity, barter, and gift economies through networks of solidarity health clinics, schools, theaters, farm-to-table groups, and more. This created a transition "from transactional to relational service models" (*Vlachokyriakos et al.*, 2016, p. 1096), grounding actions in reciprocity, mutuality, self-organization, and deep diversity. Within these networks, *Open Lab Athens* coded software to "embed the logic and values of solidarity both socially and economically in the systems" (*Vlachokyriakos et al.*, 2017, p. 3135). These digital solidarity networks—fostering both connective and collective action—encoded intersectional solidarity logics into software, platforms, and apps, challenging the capitalist logic of digital platforms. Their media practices were not only technological, but also material, affective, epistemological, and intersectional, including data justice practices such as encryption and data privacy.

Finally, the sixth dimension encompasses prefigurative distributed infrastructures fostering intersectional horizontality through metapolitical architectures of technology. In Greece, for example, interviewees used the Facebook group Indignados of Syntagma Square for peer-to-peer (P2P) debates of issues on which decisions were later made face-to-face (F2F) in the Syntagma Square protest camp general assemblies. This provided space for in-depth deliberation online, with general assemblies focused on decision making. We also interviewed members of Omnia TV in Athens, an autonomous horizontal antifascist digital TV station set up in the shared living room of two tech activists. Their leadership countered the risk of informal hierarchies of elites (Costanza-Chock, 2012; Wolfson, 2013); collective members perceived these two participants not as taking more power, but rather as shouldering more responsibility. From antifascism to anticolonialism, media projects such as XNet in Spain; Midia Ninja and Capitolina in Brazil; Groundwire, the Media Co-op, and Ricochet in Canada; and Marronage in Denmark have generated specific internal technical, economic, labor, and discursive collective processes to foster intersectional decolonizing distributive leadership structures for production of both media content and social movement actions. These six dimensions of intersectional media practices are increasingly embedded in technopolitics.

### **Technopolitics Theory**

Technopolitics was a key media and movement practice in the antiausterity wave of contention, particularly within both Latin America and the Spanish Indignados (Caballero & Gravante, 2017; Gerbaudo, 2012; Toret et al., 2013; Treré et al., 2017). However, this was not the only provenance of technopolitics. Rather, technopolitics had emerged in the GJM of the early 2000s, most notably in Indymedia (Hanke, 2005; Kidd, 2003; Milioni, 2009; Pickard, 2006; Pickerill, 2007) and the free culture movement (Fuster Morell, 2012; Milberry & Anderson, 2009).

Two decades ago, Kellner (2003) suggested that “technopolitics can be and is being used for anti-capitalist contestation” (p. 182). He defined technopolitics as “the use of new technologies such as computers and the Internet to advance political goals” (Kellner, 2003, p. 182). Toret and Calleja (2014) also traced the genealogy of technopolitics to the livestreamed anti-WTO protests of Seattle Indymedia in 1999 in “Web 1.0, at the very edge of the Web 2.0, during the height of the anti-corporate globalization movement” (p. 15). These practices, including Independent Media Centers (IMCs), “open[ed] new terrains of political struggle for voices and groups excluded from the mainstream media and thus increase[d] potential for intervention by oppositional groups” (Kellner, 2003, p. 182).

At the same time, Kellner (2003) cautions about a “threat that the computerization of society will intensify the current inequalities in relations of class, race and gender power” (p. 184). In noting these intersectional inequalities, he counterposes dangers in the capitalist domination of the Internet (Curran, Fenton, & Freedman, 2016) to participatory affordances, opening an as-yet unresolved debate about the contradictions inherent in the political economy of participatory media.

Kurban, Peña-López, and Haberer (2017) emphasize that this contradiction necessitates a consideration of power: “Technopolitics allows us to translate the complexity surrounding the integration of new technologies into power dynamics among political actors” (p. 6). As with Kellner (2003), this formulation



considers power in the political economy of media activism; however, it takes political power and technologies as separate spheres, with technologies having instrumental affordances for political action.

But technopolitics is not a practice of accessing neutral digital affordances to create communicative action. Rather, technopolitical activists mobilize digital technologies as both the tool and terrain of struggle. Edwards and Hecht (2010) argue that technopolitics signals already-integrated “hybrids of technical systems and political practices that produce new forms of power and agency” (p. 619). Unlike Kellner (2003) or Kurban and associates (2017), Edwards and Hecht (2010) see technological designs as having embedded politics. Analyzing technologies in apartheid South Africa, they found that the state integrated oppressive political objectives into technological design, with, for example, “computerised population registers serving to displace the (political) denaturalisation of millions of black South Africans into a (technical) matter of recordkeeping” (Edwards & Hecht, 2010, p. 638). These systems included biometric fingerprinting and mandatory passes—both violently enforced through racialized policing—illustrating the embedded politics of racialized social control in imperialist technologies.

Although technologies can often be reconfigured for oppositional uses, and media activists may “find ways of reshaping them (within limits) for purposes for which they were never intended” (Flesher Fominaya & Gillan, 2017, p. 385), this is not always the case. Edwards and Hecht (2010) argue that anti-Apartheid activists could not produce countertechnologies to challenge racialized technopolitical state power. As Vlachokyriakos and colleagues (2017) have found, state and capitalist technologies “promote and sustain a logic that is adverse to principles of solidarity—fostering individualism, the simplification of human relations and a market logic with significant negative effects on social and welfare justice” (p. 3135). This technopolitical state and capitalist logic paradoxically both disguises and underlines the ideological function of digital technologies from above.

In opposition to these structures, grassroots technopolitical collective swarms (Toret et al., 2013) have challenged the hypercapitalist enclosure of the Internet, providing avenues for democratic, cultural, political, and epistemological multidirectional interactive dialogue and exchange, and rejecting profit-oriented monetization systems based in advertising, data mining, and unpaid media activist labor (Dowling, Nunes, & Trott, 2007; Fuchs, 2014; McRobbie, 2011). Thus, despite Kellner’s (2003) early observation of the importance of technopolitics to intersectional groups, within social movements of the early 2000s, the politics within technopolitics was predominantly anticapitalist.

As neoliberal globalization produced intensifying enclosures of the Internet through communicative cybercapitalism (Dean, 2009; Dyer-Witheford, 1999), anticapitalist technopolitical activists developed “a set of preeminent practices of what may potentially be a multitudinous re-appropriation of the political, economic, and communicative spheres” (Toret & Calleja, 2014, p. 4). Collective action, in the subsequent era of social media platform dominance, merged into connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). In the context of austerity in Latin America and the Indignados in Spain, Toret and Calleja (2014) define technopolitics as exclusively liberatory, “the tactical and strategic, multitudinous deployment of ICTs for the organization, communication and unfolding of collective action” (p. 25). They suggest, contra Edwards and Hecht (2010), that technopolitics is a tactic always used by activists (not available to state or capital) to reappropriate power.

Building from and within anticapitalist movements, the politics of technopolitics increasingly includes intersectional meta-issues (Breton et al., 2012a; Costanza-Chock et al., 2017; Cruells & Ruiz Garcia, 2014; Ezquerra, 2012; Mendes et al., 2018; Williamson, 2015). The seemingly paradoxical incorporation of hypercapitalist social media platforms into grassroots activist media practices does not belie the fact that intersectional technopolitics also comes with a commitment to autonomous media. Capitalist platforms were not used uncritically by the media activists we interviewed; social media networks were initially “opposed by many activists because of their corporate character” (Fuster Morell, 2012, p. 389). Research participants shared critiques of targeted advertising, a lack of security and data privacy, openness to state surveillance, restricted social affordances, black box algorithms, and so on. They continued to develop prefigurative, self-managed media in their repertoires of technopolitical action, consistent with their social values:

Technopolitics may encompass forms of cyberactivism, but the key difference is that technopolitics is not limited to the digital sphere. It feeds from and into collective abilities for inventing forms of action that may take place or start on the Internet but that are not confined to it. It enables and interconnects the taking of the public urban, digital and mass media spaces. (Toret & Calleja, 2014, p. 25)

For technopolitical activists, the question of who owns and operates urban, digital, and media spaces is crucial.

### **Technopolitical Dimensions**

Seven key dimensions characterizing technopolitical media practices were identified from the three data sets (see Table 2).

***Table 2. Key Dimensions of Technopolitics.***

Dimension	Technopolitical Media Practices
1. P2P	peer-to-peer infrastructure; technologies of scale; global reach
2. multitech	multigenre, multiplatform, multidevice technologies
3. motile	online–offline motility; websites linked to spaces
4. translocal	technologies, identities, affect & knowledge production without borders
5. open	open source; free culture; net neutrality; hacktivism
6. secure	antisurveillance; data privacy; data justice; antidatafication
7. distributive	distributive technological architectures; distributive leadership potentiation

First, P2P digital infrastructures are key to media activist practices of the connected multitude, facilitating engagement with technologies and audiences of scale (Mundt et al., 2018), and coordinating technological appropriations to achieve planned viralities. For example, technopolitical activists interviewed

by MARG at XNet in Spain used P2P infrastructures for hacking, hijacking, or riding the Facebook and Twitter trending algorithms to maximize social movement mobilizations and achieve widespread mainstream media coverage (see also Treré et al., 2017). In Black Lives Matter and earlier protests against anti-Black racism, media activists paired up to simultaneously livestream and live-tweet protest events on social media as modes of protest witnessing and police countersurveillance (Hermida & Hernández-Santaolalla, 2018; Wilson & Serisier, 2010). These technopolitical practices often achieved global reach, with social media providing architectures of scale to small autonomous media collectives.

Second, technopolitics relies on multiple technologies along three axes of practice: genres, platforms/apps, and devices. Research participants predominantly produced one media genre, such as a blog, magazine, or TV station, but engaged multiple genres to mobilize their media content. Practices included being interviewed on podcasts; writing; and creating videos, music, photos, artwork, theater performances, and memes, as well as residual media for offline publics, such as posters and flyers (also digitized and shared online). Their media project's success was sublimated to an overall virality of meta-issue movement messaging through multiplatform transmedia mobilizations (Costanza-Chock, 2014). Technologies were multidevice, using corporate laptops, tablets, and smartphones but also solidarity technologies such as IMCs, open WiFi hubs, mesh networks, portable WiFi routers, and activist Internet service providers (Monterde & Postill, 2013).

Third, media activist interviewees noted the importance of online–offline motility (Toret et al., 2013), or the ability to move easily between positions in online and offline public spheres. Online P2P technologies, apps, and devices thus facilitated offline F2F engagements, including collectively produced F2F technologies such as the people's mike, where a group repeats and collectively amplifies a speaker's words (Costanza-Chock, 2012). Contours and textures of groups and social movements in online apps, devices, genres, and networks are recognizable in their offline contours, and vice versa. Translation, mobilization, construction, disruption, and deterritorialization all transmogrify through online–offline motility portals, moving through material space and cyberspace, self-propelled as recognizable collective intersectional subjectivities. Websites link to autonomous social centers; Facebook groups link to media collectives; #GreekRiot links to actual riots in the streets of Greece. From hybrid media activism (Treré, 2020), a complex multiplicity emerges of motile unlike subjectivities collectively self-propelling through camps, streets, riots, protests, solidarity networks, social media platforms, devices, discourses, affective media labor, and multimodal actions. For example, Bristol Cable is a journalist collective in the UK that produces a monthly print broadsheet in a space donated by a community member. It hosts community launches that also offer audiences opportunities to join the media project, produced in a space both digital and physical. Print articles are available online, and the collective offers in-person media production workshops. No longer differentiating media practices as online or offline, their designs, politics, activists, events, and actions self-propel liminally between the two.

Fourth, multiplicitous P2P and F2F technologies create translocal synergies across protests, cultures, movements, and uprisings, mobilizing affective unities (Apoifis, 2017), collective intelligences (Toret & Calleja, 2014), subaltern epistemologies (Santos, 2014), and transborder knowledge production (Bennett, 2004). Translocal mobilizations transgress borders digitally in solidarity technologies of no-border networks, increasingly pivotal in meta-issue movements. For example, an interviewee with Calais

Migrant Solidarity organized digital technologies for migrants to communicate about possible transportation, which borders had permeable membranes, and how to get there, providing legal information on cross-border migration on its website in multiple languages. Calais Migrant Solidarity also offered video editing skill-shares for migrants to produce self-representations and mobilized protests through digital action callouts, where global movements organized simultaneous solidarity actions linked to local issues. This replaced summit hopping and subverted the gatekeeping role of calling protests, previously the purview of large civil society organizations. Translocal digital technology and media synergies thus propel both actions and subjects across borders in cross-border collectively organized connective actions.

Fifth, self-owned autonomous platforms are free and open. Free culture movements have contributed to the technopolitical "development of the concept of the digital commons" (Fuster Morell, 2012, p. 390), in which digital communicative spaces are shared for the common good (Kidd, 2003). Code is open-source, websites are open-editorial, and technologies are oriented toward public inhabitation. Hacktivists mobilize digital technologies to secure protester data and communications from state and corporate surveillance as data activists struggle to enact digital citizenship (Hintz, Dencik, & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2018). Media activists at XNet in Spain whom we interviewed, for example, created an encrypted drop box for citizens to become whistleblowers and crowdfunded legal fees to prosecute corrupt politicians, providing an open-access spreadsheet of funds spent, producing multiplicitous open technologies of accountability.

Sixth, a balance is negotiated among open access, editorial and membership collectives and technologies, and secure, encrypted, and antisurveillant formations in surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019) intersecting with surveillant democracy. Proactive and reactive data activism push surveillant technologies toward social justice, using big data to contest power (Milan, 2017). Interviewee participants with Athens Live used big data journalism to produce an exposé of Airbnb's destruction of long-term rental housing in Athens (Sideris, 2019). Moreover, participants in a grassroots research collective used public data to monitor white supremacist groups in order to confront their racist street attacks. Data activism is key to technopolitical contestations of exploitative mechanisms, data proxies, bad data training, and proprietary algorithms that both use and generate big data, amplifying inequalities of race, class, gender, and more (Noble, 2018; O'Neil, 2016; Sandvig, Hamilton, Karahalios, & Langbort, 2016; Wachter-Boettcher, 2017).

Seventh, technological architectures of distributive leadership potentiate networked horizontal organizing structures (Toret & Calleja, 2014). Anticapitalist solidarity software, for example, was designed by an interviewee from Open Lab Athens to transgress authoritarian capitalist and state communicative logics (Vlachokyriakos et al., 2017). They instead encoded solidarity into apps to facilitate sharing, collaboration, horizontality, and multinodal distributive leadership networks. Transgressive digital infrastructures and architectures thus create open-ended experimentality in anti-oppression systems. Moreover, for many of the media projects we researched with, technologies of distributive leadership were evident in the pivotal role they played in digitally mobilizing critical discourses, popular info-actions, and multidimensional synergies (Fuster Morell, 2012).

These seven dimensions of technopolitics form the second half of the theoretical framework proposed here.

### Intersectional Technopolitics

As illustrated earlier, technological and intersectional strategies used by meta-issue movements and media activists are integrated to the extent that they can no longer be separated. Therefore, mapping an integrated intersectional technopolitics is necessitated (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Key Dimensions of Intersectional Technopolitics.**

Dimension	Intersectional Technopolitical Practices
intersectional & anticapitalist	digital accessibility; foreground media projects by marginalized groups; disengage from capital; media are decolonizing, antiracist, feminist, queer-trans-feminist, etc.
distributed online–offline architectures & motility	online–offline motility; distributive architectures of technology; distributive leadership; connection to social centers, refugee squats, feminist makerspaces, hackerspaces
multiplicities of technologies & spaces	multiple genres, platforms, devices, actor-types, groups, spaces, actions, labs, IMCs; balance openness with security; data, social & political justice activism
translocal solidarity economies & technologies	solidarities without borders; technology-enabled networks across difference; translocal mobilizations; solidarity economies; solidarity software design
collective autonomy through direct action	technologies and politics are collectively autonomous; ends achieved through actions; collectively self-owned and self-managed sustainable technological and social infrastructures

First, technopolitics is integrally intersectional and anticapitalist, with meta-issue movements using digital technologies to fight intersecting systems of oppression. Strategies foreground the media power of intersectional media projects undertaken by marginalized groups, playing leadership roles in the global autonomous mediascape mobilizing simultaneously against intersectional neoliberal capitalism, gender oppression, racism, heteronormativity, and austerity through a multiplicity of digital technologies.

Second, leadership within autonomous media projects is through distributive P2P networks with F2F motility. Architectures of distributed technologies are integrated with distributed architectures of autonomous collective self-leadership; these distributive leadership models extend rhizomatically from local to national and global spaces. P2P architectures are connected through hybridity to F2F spaces. These include autonomous social centers, refugee squats, feminist makerspaces, hackerspaces, occupied anarchist

theatres, grassroots medical clinics, food security solidarity networks, COVID-19 mutual aid collectives (Pleyers, 2020), and more.

Third, technopolitics is multi-issue, multiactor, and multitech. Multiplicities of technological genres, platforms, and devices intersect with multiple actor-types, groups, collectivities, and organizations engaged in integrated intersectional collective and connective action. Spaces include material F2F spaces, digital P2P spaces, action camps, IMCs, hacker labs, protest assemblies, squats, and more. Ease of mobility and motility among multiplicitous politics, platforms, spaces, genres, and groups is key. Technologies and spaces are open, free, and accessible across intersectional identities, nondatified, secure, encrypted, and protected from intersectional capitalist and state surveillance.

Fourth, translocal horizontal solidarities across borders engage multipolitics, multitechnologies, multispaces, and the multitude, enabling networked media production and distributed communication across intersectional cultural and geopolitical space. Media and movement activists work in conjunction with translocal social movement mobilizations, including no-border networks, migrant rights, Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, LGBTQ+ organizations, Indigenous groups, and so on. Technopolitical multiplicities of communicative affect, knowledges, labor, and collective intelligences operate through solidarity logics in intersectional anticapitalist decolonial economies, technologies, cultures, and experimental designs.

Fifth, collective autonomy applies to technologies and politics alike through integration. Autonomous media activists mobilize direct actions, achieving ends through actions, creating collectively self-owned technological and social infrastructures liberatory by design. Through direct actions oppositional to or disengaged from communicative capitalism, they work toward liberatory technologically and politically integrated P2P and F2F infrastructures using intersectional technopolitics.

### **Contradictions and Tensions**

Thus far, we have articulated an ideal type for intersectional technopolitics, supported in the first instance by empirical evidence. In practice, many contradictions and tensions arise. Here we instantiate three such contradictions related to horizontality.

First, media projects attempted to develop liberatory intersectional practices within horizontal collective spaces fostering equality, rejecting hierarchical leadership models. However, the media projects themselves tended to play a leadership role in broader movements, producing key analytical discourses, mobilizing participants, and framing the movement in ways sometimes picked up by mainstream media. XNet interviewees, for example, noted that in the Indignados movement, established activists acted as facilitators for general assemblies and modeled horizontal practices on social media for newer activists, playing a mentorship role. Similarly, participants in Smaschieramenti in Italy organized gender conscientization workshops on unmasking masculinities in which participants from the broader milieu reflected collectively on deconstructing intersectional masculinities and the gender binary in relation to power within personal and political spheres; as such, the horizontal collective played a leadership role in mobilizing gender discourses and practices. Activists with Burnt Bras in Greece, to take a third example, wrote analytical tracts on intersectional feminism for their blog, disseminating them on social media for the

broader movement and serving as a movement “anchor point” for theoretical development (Jeppesen, Kruzynski, Lakoff, & Sarrasin, 2014). The contradiction of rejecting hierarchical leadership models within autonomous collectives that in turn play a leadership role within larger movements indicates that horizontality is not without power relations, but rather shares power outward through spheres of influence (Gordon, 2008; Jeppesen, 2019).

Second, there is a contradiction between the capitalist political economy of social media and intersectional anticapitalist horizontal media practices. The reach of social media has made it mandatory for media activists, despite critiques of capitalist platforms. Participants noted that algorithms can be oppressive in racist, gendered, classist, heteronormative, and other ways, an argument supported by research (Noble, 2018; O’Neil, 2016; Sandvig et al., 2016). Moreover, platform production and labor structures enact intersectional capitalist oppressions through the hierarchies of Silicon Valley. Media activists who use platforms to disseminate intersectional discourses may be exposed to advertising that is racist, sexist, heteronormative, and/or colonial; trolls who mobilize misogynist and racist backlashes; misogynist affordances for partner stalking, threats of sexual violence, and doxing (dumping a person’s personal information online with an invocation to do harm); and so on—with offline consequences.

Aware of these contradictions, media activists mobilized against intersectional digital oppressions. One collective, for example, organized men in their group to confront sexist trolls and take the burden of emotional labor from the shoulders of female activists. Bristol Cable organized journalists into support pairs so that if someone experienced oppression, they had a mentor for conversations, backed up by collective processes. Burnt Bras limited the time each member spent dealing with online trolls. They posted their blog link on social media to direct readers off trolled capitalist platforms and onto their website, which was populated with intersectional analysis and closed to commenting.

Mental health effects were a key concern. Many groups mentioned socializing in person as important to recovering from negative affective platform labor, mutually supporting each other’s mental health in convivial, relaxing moments. However, this was not universal. Some felt that socializing negatively reinforced social hierarchies within groups. Some mentioned that they were there to produce media and did not have the emotional capacity or professional training to do mental health support work. Some activists in mental health crisis temporarily or permanently stepped back from collective commitments. The contradictions between internal liberatory practices of intersectionality in horizontal autonomous media projects and external oppressive practices and hierarchies of social media platforms with which they engage—and the negative affective impacts—thus remain unresolved.

Third, intersectional technopolitics remain in stark contrast to the intersectionally oppressive structures in which these collectives operate in society at large. While many projects have made inroads, and intersectionality is increasingly accepted as important within some societies, much remains to be done. Certainly, social movement and media activists function within systems of oppression, including global and domestic digital divides along intersectional lines of race, class, gender, colonialism, and sexuality. The political economy of these circumstances impinges on activists who may experience reduced access to devices, skills, technologies, employment, infrastructure, and so on. Nonetheless, they continue to do the

difficult everyday work of intersectional technopolitical activism, sharing tangible and intangible resources based on an ethos of solidarity and mutual aid (Jeppesen & Petrick, 2018; Mundt et al., 2018).

Despite, or perhaps because of, these and other challenges in intersectional technopolitics, it seems pivotal to understand the integration of meta-issue intersectional politics with multiplicitous digital technologies. Intersectional technopolitical practices have become even more critical as we move through a global pandemic (Pleyers, 2020) in which intersectional oppressions have shaped inequitable health outcomes, with movement and media activists organizing collectively and connectively in response.

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