

New “Danger Zone” in Europe: Representations of Place in Social Media–Supported Protests

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Social media–supported protests build circuits of collective interaction that grow across physical, material, digital, and virtual spaces. Extending the research on the governance of communicative spaces, we ask whether representations of place define the public space and whether their analysis suffices to grasp the powerful processes embedded within that space. Consequently, we analyze the available representations of place in the Twitter communication about the protests against the *Akademikerball*, which is a ball organized by the right-wing populist party, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), in Vienna, Austria. The analysis shows multiple forms of representation, but further consideration of its limitations takes into account three other key features of the public space. Together with an examination of representations, the analysis of textures, structures, and connections inform four modes of analysis that ought to be explored simultaneously to comprehensively understand the governance of the communicative space that is occupied in social media–supported protests.

Keywords: public space, protest, communicative space, Twitter, social media, activist communication, representations

“The whole Viennese city center is closed off. Fraternity members dance. #nowkr.”

Along with a picture of antiriot police, helmets in hand, blocking access to a street in the center of Vienna, Austria, a tweeter/citizen expressed his outrage over the *Akademikerball* (“Academic’s Ball”) staged in the Hofburg (see Figure 1). *New York Times* blogger Harvey Morris (2012) calls the annual ball a magnet for people “nostalgic for Austria’s wartime union with Adolf Hitler” (para. 3). In addition, philosopher Isolde Charim (2015) states the following:

The ball is not just a ball but a political manifestation with three aims: connecting the European right extreme, orchestrating them with the aim to endow it with a “high culture” identity, as well as the advance and penetration into the “center” of the Republic—into the Hofburg. (para. 5; own translation)

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Date submitted: 2015–02–11

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 **david unterholzner** @dvdunterholzner · 24. Jan.
Die gesamte Wiener Innenstadt ist abgeriegelt. Burschschafter tanzen.
[#nowkr](#)



Figure 1. A tweeter complains about the security measures for the Akademikerball.

The Hofburg has hosted the governments of multiple empires and republics since the 13th century and has been expanded to host several museums and, among other things, the 1,000-square-meter festival hall. The impressive historical venue and the surrounding Square of the Heroes (*Heldenplatz*) are also the spaces that were used in 1938 by Adolph Hitler to proclaim the *Anschluss*, or union of Germany with Austria into the Third Reich. Today, the imperial building also houses the official headquarters of the Austrian federal president. The authorization to use such a public space and the costs to the safety of the participants in the ball—including the closing off of access to main avenues and to a major tourist area in the city—have provoked outrage.¹

On January 24, 2014, the celebration of the ball activated severe security measures, including the declaration of a “danger zone” within which the right of assembly was forbidden and independent reporting was hindered. Reporters without Borders argued that the decision restricted media freedoms. The police also banned people from covering their faces (“Vermummungsverbot”). Later that night, after 6,000 people peacefully demonstrated against the ball, the center of Vienna became a “hot zone.” Reports

¹ The ball was formerly organized by German-national student fraternities. Since 2013, the right-wing populist opposition party, the FPÖ, has taken over the organization and changed the ball’s name from “Ball des Wiener Korporationsring” to “Wiener Akademikerball.” The year before, bowing to public pressure “caused by the current political and media dimension, which the holding of the ball has reached” (Hofburg Vienna, 2011, para. 3; own translation), the Hofburg operation company announced that the ball would have to take place elsewhere. To prevent the loss of the highly symbolic venue, as stated, the ball’s name and the official organizers have been replaced.

of violent clashes between police and self-proclaimed antifascist demonstrators (many of whom covered their faces) lasted hours and spread throughout the streets and across social media in real time; 15 people were arrested and 20 injured.²

The case of the Akademikerball builds on the conflicting views concerning the governance of public space and its legitimacy. This is the issue that this article deals with: the governance of the communicative space in the Viennese demonstrations against the Akademikerball. The discussion about the use of public spaces to express social disagreement and about the authorization from governmental and security forces—including the issuing of permission for use, the protection of the users, and the rights of freedom of expression and of demonstration—are not straightforward. To provide another example, demonstrations in the public space are now being strongly regulated in Spain. The “organic law for the protection of citizen security” (Congreso, 2014), which was passed by parliament in December 2014, introduced sanctions for demonstrating and for inviting demonstrations online. Citizens and opposition parties called it a “gag law” and an attack on the right to protest. On December 20, 2014, and January 25, 2015, thousands of Spaniards protested the law (see, e.g., “Spain’s New Security Law,” 2014). In both cases, the occupation of the public space to express outrage or disagreement is not only the object of discussion but also the environment in which this communicative debate is embedded. In the current case being analyzed in this article, the discussion about how to govern the public space takes place physically on the streets, in the institutions, and simultaneously and extensively on social media.

These communicative environments inform the spaces of political struggle. The combination of mobile and geolocated devices, social network sites, and the struggle for political visibility on the streets challenges traditional conceptions of the public space, media of communication, and political language of protest. Activism is resignifying and creatively reappropriating the possibilities enabled by software platforms and generating areas of social interaction that contest forms of political and public communication. New forms of protest and demonstration are happening with significant online support (e.g., Bennett, Segerberg, & Walker, 2014; Castells, 2012; Poell, 2014). The political values of these alternative public spaces are still uncertain, as are the forms of channeling, steering, and governing their organization and their translation from social media platforms into established institutional forms of political action. These new conditions for social political expression reactivate an old debate surrounding the links between communication and legitimacy (e.g., Castells, 2012; Sassen, 2006) and the political values and understandings of communicative spaces (e.g., Dahlgren, 2005).

This article critically analyzes the spatial configurations constructed during the protest as a set of representations of place produced and shared during the events of the protests against the Akademikerball. Representations of place are among the dimensions of the public space. In keeping with Watkins (2005), space is a social construct. Lefebvre (1992), in this sense, has extensively explored the cultural process of the production of space, and other scholars have provided background information to

² The information was confirmed by participant observation and coverage by national and international high-quality news sites (see, e.g., Dearden, 2014; “Grafik,” 2014; “Polizei verordnet Vermummungsverbot,” 2014).

enable a distinction to be made between space and place. For instance, Tuan (1979) stated in his grounding article that

space and place together define the nature of geography. Spatial analysis or the explanation of spatial organisation is at the forefront of geographical research. . . . Place incarnates the experiences and aspirations of a people. Place is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspectives of the people who have given it meaning. (p. 387)

As space and place are socially produced and reproduced, the analysis of representations provides a methodological opportunity to grasp the understandings of place and to take them as a fundamental aspect of the configurations of the public space. This article, therefore, deals with the representations of place as part of the communicative space.

The common terrain that emerges in this area from the disciplinary approaches of geography and communication research concerned with the notion of public space and its political implications has been explored by Adams and Jansson (2012). They identify four disciplinary intersections linked to the distinction between space and place: representations, textures, structures, and connections. "Representations and textures relate closely to places, while structures and connections occupy and create spaces" (Adams & Jansson, 2012, p. 306). These four modes might help to define new, complex nuances of the notion of the public space not only as a theoretical contribution to its definition but also as an analytical tool.

This article explores the first of the four areas of disciplinary contact identified by Adams and Jansson (2012) as a further critical step in the discussion about the analytical model described in earlier works (Rodriguez-Amat & Brantner, 2014). The results show that whereas the analysis of the representations of place is fundamental for approaching the notion of public space as being socially constructed, the consideration of representations alone might lead to a distorted appearance of the nature and configuration of the public space. Therefore, it is necessary to complement the findings of the analysis of representations with the analysis of other modes of configuration of the public space (the textures of place and the structures and connections of the communicative space). These findings and reflections contribute to the provision of theoretical and methodological inputs into the field of the governance of communicative spaces.

The Governance of Communicative Spaces

The demonstration against the Akademikerball in Vienna needs to be understood as a communicative debate about the governance of the public space. A growing field of research dedicated to the governance of communicative spaces (e.g., Barreneche, 2012; Milan & Hintz, 2013; Rodriguez-Amat & Brantner, 2014; Sarikakis, 2012) focuses on the political implications of spatial and social justice for the practice of democracy. In the research on the governance of communicative spaces, the notion of the public space has a double meaning; it refers to both the circuits across which the communication flows and the notion of a shared space that is open to citizens for their use. Democracy has to be grounded on a

notion of open and accessible communicative spaces that enable debate, negotiation, struggle, and (dis)agreement (Schlesinger, 1999).

However, in the current case, the circuits of communication appear across multiple media languages (video, pictures, sound, and text) and multiple platforms (the streets, social media sites, mobile devices, and mass media). The entanglement of social movements and technologically driven expressions cannot, then, be easily substantiated. Instead, it makes sense to distinguish areas of attention and, for instance, in keeping with Langlois (2011), to take into account how participatory media set regimens of production of meaning and what forms of public space are defined through these activities. Therefore, in this article, the critical discussion approaches the communicative configurations of space, which are understood as an expanded and complex circuit of communication flows produced and activated during social protests. The resulting political space of action expands beyond the physical, the material, the digital, and the virtual. The understanding of the configurations of such an environment, which is formed by an amalgam of surfaces, places, locations, maps, and activities, is a fundamental step toward identifying the mechanisms of its governance. Here, the notions of public space, freedom of expression, and spatial justice are at the core of a research agenda that inevitably begins by identifying the extension and the specific features of the occupied space.

The most extensive research on protests and democracy and the discussions involving mobile devices, social networks, and geolocated constructed spaces appears fragmented when the purpose is—as in the case of this article—to understand the political weight of the space resulting from the action, the interaction, and the urban territories that are used for the political claims. Valuable insights can be obtained from research that falls into three main categories: (a) research that focuses on the ecologies of protests, including analysis of the hyperlinks or integrated system of actors, action, and technology; (b) research that explores how social media shapes activists' communications; and (c) investigation of the uses of mobile and locative media as interface-mediated social interactions. However, while useful, each of these individual areas fails to provide the integral approach that we propose in this article.

The protest ecologies encompass a set of approaches that includes work by Bennett and Segerberg (2012; see also Bennett, Segerberg, & Walker, 2014) that deals with the organization of crowds by tracing the hyperlink dynamics of Twitter and research by Poell (2014) that contrasts the organizational formations against the architectural conditions of the social media platforms in use. Treré (2012) explores the ecosystem that is formed by actors, practices, and technologies by observing and interviewing protest participants. This area of research sheds light on several aspects of our research needs but neglects the aspects concerning the integrated spaces and the specific features of the settings in which the demonstrations take place.

Similarly, extensive research has been dedicated to exploring how social media are shaping social movements and activist communications. Within this framework, research by Harlow and Harp (2012) considers the uses of social media for activism in relation to offline action, and Loader (2008) examines how technology may be shaping social movements and protest dimensions. Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia (2014) elaborate on an evolutionary model that considers the stages of the adoption of new technologies for protests. These approaches explain the integration of communicative technologies in the

social action of protesting, but they still fall short when it comes to opening the view beyond the protest and toward the integration of the action inside the space of political debates.

The third area of related research explores the space (and the interface) as a technologically defined field of locative media, geomeia, crowdmapping, or interface-mediated social interactions (e.g., Farman, 2012; Lapenta, 2011; Sutko & de Souza e Silva, 2011; Zeffiro, 2012). Here, the physical space “becomes an interface for information, and information becomes an interface for the physical space” (de Souza e Silva & Sutko, 2011, p. 31). This view provides an integrative understanding of the social and electronic interactions online, according to which mobile media connect people to one another and to places (Sutko & de Souza e Silva, 2011), as “the device serves as a part of the interface that is constituted as the larger set of social relations” (Farman, 2012, p. 64). The insightful but rather technocentric views of these approaches demand a complementary step that incorporates the cultural process of the negotiations underpinning the collective understandings of space.

The case at stake here demands an integrative approach with the empirical potential to consider the complexity of the multifaceted space that is built across both online and offline communications concerning the protests, but without fragmenting it. The theoretical insight also needs to explain the critical mass of new configurations of space without either centering or abandoning the social and technical conditions that make it possible. The mediatization approach (e.g., Couldry & Hepp, 2013; Krotz, 2007) provides valuable theoretical insight into this matter. Indeed, the resulting space is mediated and is produced and formed by the linkage between the geosphere—that is, the physical, material world—and the infosphere, which is the symbolic representation of the physical world (Lapenta, 2011). Such an approach turns the whole process of linking and protesting into a process of mediatization and, therefore, into a cultural process. The cultural turn that stresses social struggles and power negotiations can be analyzed from the social-constructivist perspective of mediatization (for the different concepts, see Couldry & Hepp, 2013). From this perspective, protests, the cultural process, and social network activity across the used devices and interfaces and on social media platforms can be approached simultaneously (Rodriguez-Amat & Brantner, 2014).

In this sense, mediatization multiplies communication and place, as the “textural links are increasingly fluid and their evolution via mediatization has numerous repercussions involving privacy, mobility, personal power, and security” (Adams & Jansson, 2012, p. 310). Jansson (2013) points to Grusin’s (2010) concept of premediation to indicate that action and interaction are intentionally staged to become mediated. Staging protests in public places is, thus, a powerful opportunity to show dissent collectively and to confront the dominant power. Protesters gain symbolic power as they become “*visible* in the eyes of the public. It is the staging of social movement in public space that translates the movement into visual power, a spectacle of political bodies” (Lim, 2014, p. 63). Jansson (2013) also explains that premediated spaces bring forth the interrelationship of mediatization and the contested production of social space. Paraphrasing Lefebvre (1992), (social) spaces are (social) products, and thus the use of social media and the construction of their own social spaces helps protesters to alter the dominant ideologies of place and space.

This cultural approach to mediated protests and to online activity across geography provides a fertile theoretical environment and refreshing methodological opportunities that avoid the dichotomy between the media-centered and place-centered approaches. Furthermore, the use of mobile devices and social media for communication and interaction among protesters and to inform the public can be regarded as a form of cultural practice (Zeffiro, 2012). It is here where geography and communication intersect: A *material turn* occurs alongside a *spatial turn* (Adams & Jansson, 2012; Thielmann, 2010) and a *mobility turn* (Urry, 2007). It is not only social scientists who have acknowledged the spatial turn and the rematerialization of place; geographers have also recognized the cultural, humanistic, and media turn (Thielmann, 2010). Hence, authors such as Adams and Jansson (2012) and Thielmann (2010) argue for the building of a bridge between the disciplines: for a communication or media geography. Indeed, protesters use social media for organizational purposes but also for communication and interaction during protests, especially by using mobile devices on site, where locations are connected to distant databases "facilitating transit through and between places while offering both spatial and nonspatial information" (Adams & Jansson, 2012, p. 310).

This article explores the role of representations in the production of (public) space. After all, we are spatial beings who contribute actively and collectively to the construction of our embracing spatialities (Watkins, 2005). The analysis of the representations of place should, thus, point to the very act of producing (public) space. As previously noted, this article focuses on the specific representations of place available in the communicative flows generated around the Vienna protests. Representation is one of the four areas where geography and communication overlap that Adams and Jansson (2012) identified. Previous research has dealt with how these four areas can function as four modes of analysis (Rodriguez-Amat & Brantner, 2014), but no specific research has provided an explanation of how the analysis of representations of place contributes to the understanding of public space and whether representations are sufficient to perceive its configuration. An analysis of the representations of place as practiced and understood by Twitter users during the night of the Vienna protests should help us to identify the specific importance of representations in the configuration of the public space. By critically considering the limitations of such an analysis, we can also approach the eventual need and possible contribution of the three other modes of analysis: textures, structures, and connections. Finally, the resulting reflection on the possibilities and limitations of this approach also contributes to the current understandings of the governance of communicative spaces.

Methods

This article reports the analysis of the representations of place in the tweets published from January 23 to 31, 2014. A large portion (around 25%) of the 32,500 tweets and retweets using the hashtags #nowkr, #wkr, or #akademikerball contained photographs.³ We decided to analyze a sample of tweets containing uploaded pictures because the visual mode is particularly suitable for conveying spatial representations (Lobinger, 2012). Even though pictures are able to convey their own unique meaning, this

³ The numbers are calculated using Twitter Decahose, which is a service that provides 10% of all Twitter content. The raw data were used to project the total number of tweets, and the numbers and tweets were provided by Jürgen Pfeffer (Carnegie Mellon University).

is shaped by the accompanying verbal text and vice versa (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2008). As visual and verbal modes work together, they should not be regarded in isolation; therefore, we have considered the visual and textual content of the respective tweets.

The material was categorized and clustered in a process of typology building that is based on grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2006). For the process of inductive category generation, we used a sample of 379 tweets extracted from the Decahose data set (see Note 3). Throughout the analytical process, potentially contradictory evidence was identified, and the categories were refined accordingly (Humphreys & Liao, 2011). The figures provided in the Results section show typical examples that illustrate the different categories.

Results

The findings of the analysis are organized into two subsections. The first focuses on the analysis of representations of place. We structure the analysis of representations into three main strands—that is, the three types of representation of place that we have inferred from the analysis. The second subsection critically explores and discusses the limitations of the analysis and elaborates on the need for and contribution of the analysis of the other three mentioned modes.

Representations of Place

Adams and Jansson (2012) relate representations to the imagined space and the accompanying mythology that construct and define places and spaces—that is, the contents of communications that refer to the place and space. The notion of representations does not distinguish the various languages in which they can be reproduced. Sometimes they are visual; sometimes they are textual; sometimes they are online, as are personal posts by tweeters; and sometimes they are reproduced by the press or other forms of communication, such as advertising. Places are material and symbolic: “Each particular place representation is contingent and unique: complexly situated with regard to power” (Adams & Jansson, 2012, p. 307). The analysis of the representations of place in the communication processes, therefore, reveals the intentions according to which the space is shared and commonly understood (Rodriguez-Amat & Brantner, 2014). The analysis also reveals that there are conflicting understandings that emerge from multiple narratives involving space and place. Moreover, these perceptions and the multiple narratives provide a fundamental but incomplete understanding of the public space that is constructed around the demonstration.

Our analysis of the representations of place reproduced by online communications in the days surrounding the Akademikerball identified three main categories: (a) territorial representations, (b) representations of location, and (c) representations of activity. Maps and “the world” as a place in the international context belong to the first category, whereas the second includes the streets, the ball, the monuments, and the buildings. The third category refers to the representations of people, citizens demonstrating, the riots, the spaces protected by police, and those entering the ball. These three categories also help us to organize and perceive the diversity of the various understandings of the situation and the places reproduced in media. The three categories that were extracted by our analysis

can be loosely related to the triad of space presented by Lefebvre (1992), who distinguishes representations of space, spatial practices, and spaces of representation. Beyond the divergent uses of "space" and "place," the particularities of our analysis have invited us to specify the differences in every case while keeping our particular nomenclature.

Territorial representations. This refers to the general and abstract representations of place: maps and mental projections. The abstraction and codified forms of a general and objectifying view of a Euclidean space makes maps suitable for the Lefebvrian notion of *representations of space*, which is the "dominant space . . . constructed of symbols, codifications and abstract representations . . . , the manifest representation of our mental constructs of the spaces of our rational, abstract understandings" (Watkins, 2005, p. 212). In particular, the territorial representations of the protests included several maps of the city center. First, the media published information on security measures and used maps as visual support (see, e.g., "Grafik," 2014). Twitter users also published maps, for example, showing the restricted area and comparing it to the area that had been blocked by security measures implemented in 2006 during George Bush's visit (Figure 2, left). The second map (Figure 2, right) was circulated on Twitter with the intention of informing users about the itinerary of the organized demonstrations. These maps were used to report territorial representations, and they acted as political visual statements. Maps are not the only element that helped territorial representations; the verbal texts and links contained insistent references to the international press, to the citizens of the world, and to Europe as an international audience. This representation evokes the notion that "the world is watching": a definition of an interconnected territory of which Vienna and the event are a part. In the example in Figure 7 (right), a Twitter user states that "even the *Japan Times* is writing about the 'monster's ball.'" Around the maps that circulated extensively on social media, verbal representations such as "new 'danger zone' in Europe" (Figure 2, right) or "red zone" (Figure 2, right) nuanced the informative value of the images by connoting them with intention. Hence, whereas maps are visualizations of the abstract idea of space, the maps that were available on Twitter were always intentional and incorporated colors, arrows, and itineraries that helped to introduce action in the abstract notion of an absolute space in Lefebvre's sense.

Representations of location. Whereas territorial representations consist of abstract contextualizing pieces of information that situate the place in relation and opposition to the rest of the world, representations of location are specific pieces of decontextualized information. Only by adding external knowledge of the city is it possible to identify the represented locations. In a certain sense, Lefebvre's (1992) notion of *spatial practices* fits here; as Watkins (2005) states, "It is the learnt but often eventually intuitive, spatial practices that enable individuals to participate effectively in a spatial event" (p. 213). In this sense, the hegemonic narrative that constructs the city either as a tourist attraction or as an everyday-life environment helps to situate the locations within a broader and normative understanding of the city that sets the rules regarding its expected use.

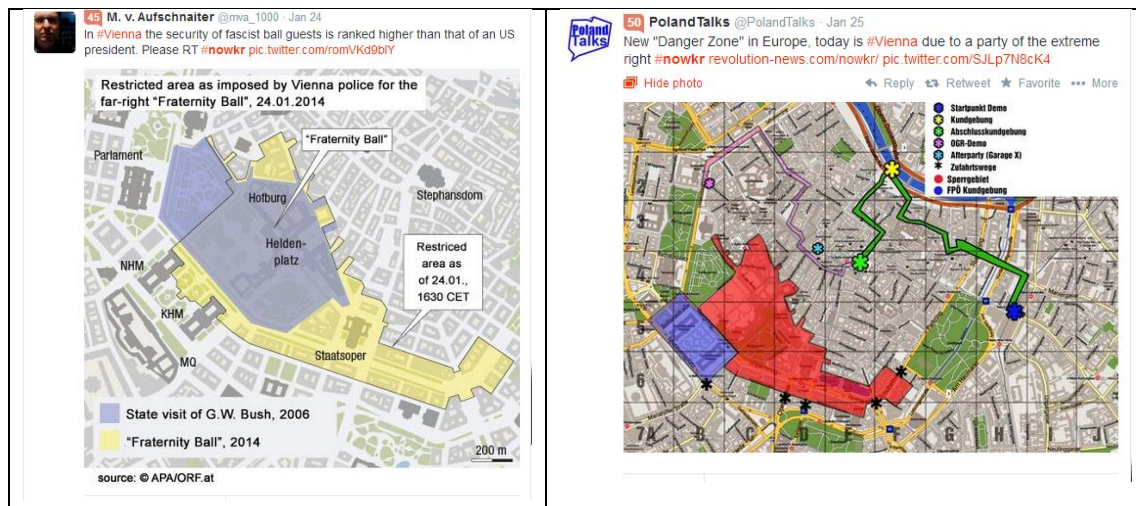


Figure 2. The two maps exemplify territorial representations of place.

The tweets provide representations of place that include images of the city buildings, the streets, and their symbolic architectonic and urban values. One of the commonplace elements in the representation of location involves the juxtaposition of tourist monuments and major attractions with police barricades (Figure 3, right, shows the *Heldenplatz*). In presenting easily identifiable images of the city under exceptional conditions related to the event, the city is metonymically represented through its monuments and its features (Figure 3, left, shows black flags waving on the façade of the opera house). In addition, these images embody the citizens' appeal to their right to their city (Purcell, 2013). The expressions of proximity, comfort, and possession ("my city") that imply a sense of normativity contrast with images of police securing public areas and generate disturbing representations of strangeness in the familiar and of discomfort in the easiest activity ("one does not simply walk through Vienna," Figure 3, right). These dramatic contrasts between the expected use (spatial practices) and the exceptional circumstances are pictured as empty avenues or empty metro stations (Figure 6, right). Representations of location thus include the spaces of the city that is named or pictured under the particular circumstances of this event.

Representations of activity. These representations emerge from the analysis of how the public space is signified and used. The place is made meaningful by the activity that is occurring within it. This category can be related to Lefebvre's (1992) *spaces of representation*: "the space of lived experience . . . the space that overlays physical space as it is lived in the everyday course of life" (Watkins, 2005, p. 213). The analysis shows a growing number of stories and enactments with the multiplying effect of a mirrored system of representations that express a complex reality. Indeed, these stories and the represented characters (police, protesters, citizens, dancers, and so on) combine in narratives that become clear as they expose the narrated, the narrator, and the represented in an extensive form of storytelling. The actors who participate are not only represented but also represent their counterparts and contribute to the narratives as reproducers and as the reproduced. The representations of activity include

the practices by which the various groups—protesters, citizens, participants in the ball, and the security forces—appropriate the space and interpret the city, even if this interpretation conflicts with other understandings of the city.

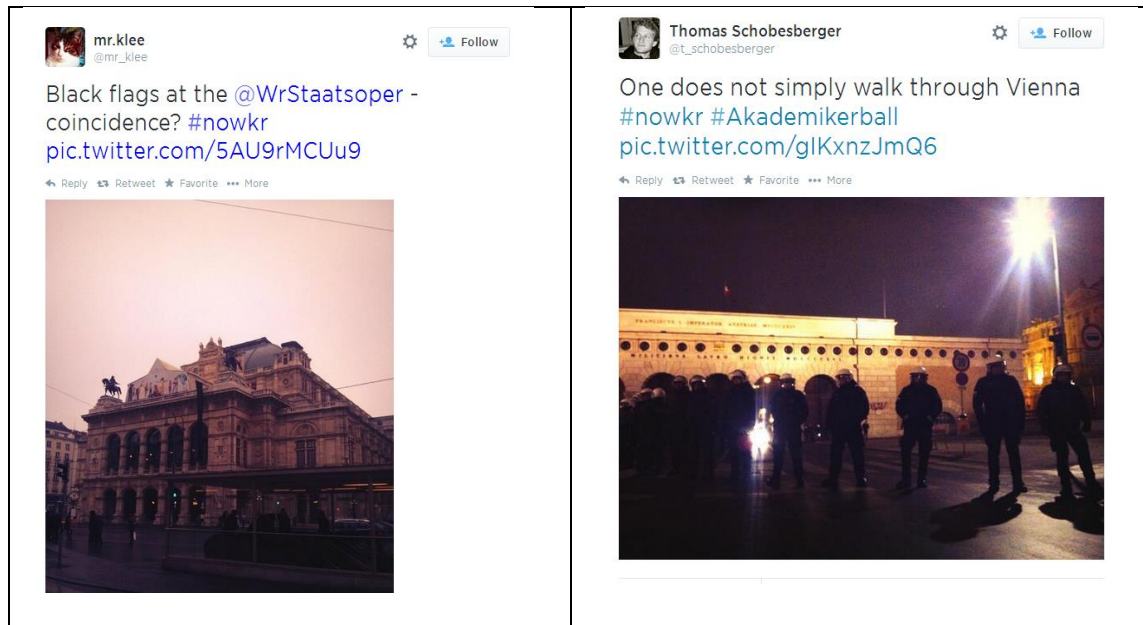


Figure 3. Two examples of representations of location.

Two main moments in the representation of activities can be identified: (a) the moment of the official announcement of the security measures by the police (access ban to city areas and *Vermummungsverbot* [prohibiting people from disguising themselves]) and the social reactions to it, and (b) the moments during and after the ball, the protests, and the riots. These moments of human activities help organize understandings of place and of the people related to the urban, the virtual, and the communicative spaces (before, during, and after the ball and the protests). These two moments are defined as representations of the public spaces that are related to the uses that the citizens give to them.

The left example in Figure 4 corresponds clearly to the first moment of activity. This specific picture relates to a general trend that was perceivable across social media during the days and hours before the event: People started posting selfies with scarves and hats before leaving their homes. The creative protest became a popular form of questioning the curfew in the city center by *reductio ad absurdum*. Humorous, creative, and ironic actions have become common in social-media-supported actions of protest as part of what has been considered a new language of dissent (Almog & Barzilai, 2014). The operation, therefore, is also a form of representing the city “under curfew” through the activity of its citizens “resisting” and constructing a counterhegemonic understanding of the city.



Figure 4. Representations of activity before (left) and during (right) the protests.

The second moment of activity is perceived clearly in three simultaneous directions. It is the representation of the narrative climax of the course of events—that is, the clash between three understandings of the city: that of the participants of the ball, that of the protesters, and that of the police. This fundamental conflict on three sides shows the participants at the ball, the ambivalent role of the police, and the protesters in action. Three cities are constructed in tension to each other. On one side, the elegantly dressed participants (Figure 5, left) are shown inside the restricted areas of the city. These representations are, however, critically reinterpreted by many tweeters and protesters who insist on the illegitimate use of the public spaces of the city and the constant equation of the ball participants with the national-socialist ideology (Figure 5, right, the black and white image of a ball with a swastika visible in the background merges with contemporary colorized dancers). This equation is reproduced in several forms: visual, textual, and hypertextual. The first understanding of the city, then, involves the elegance of the ball, the areas of secured space, and the distance between a few individualized ball participants and the rest of the city.

Diametrically opposed and simultaneous, another city is represented—the city of the protesters. Approximately 6,000 people peacefully walked the streets of Vienna showing disagreement. Some of them shared images of crowded streets at night (Figure 4, right), but the dissemination of these images soon stopped in favor of the nocturnal images of the dark clothing of *black block* demonstrators opposing police in uniforms. These representations show a crowded city that is reflected in often unfocused images, is sometimes openly violent, and is sometimes simply messy, chaotic, and unclear. The violence is often expressed by the contrast between uniformed police in shiny white antiriot helmets and a crowd of anonymous demonstrators (Figure 6, left).



Figure 5. The activity of the ball participants is also represented under the hashtag #nowkr.

There is also a third city that is constructed and reproduced under the representations of a safe city. It is a city of empty spaces with uniformed police (Figure 1; Figure 3; Figure 6, right), and it is peaceful and deserted.

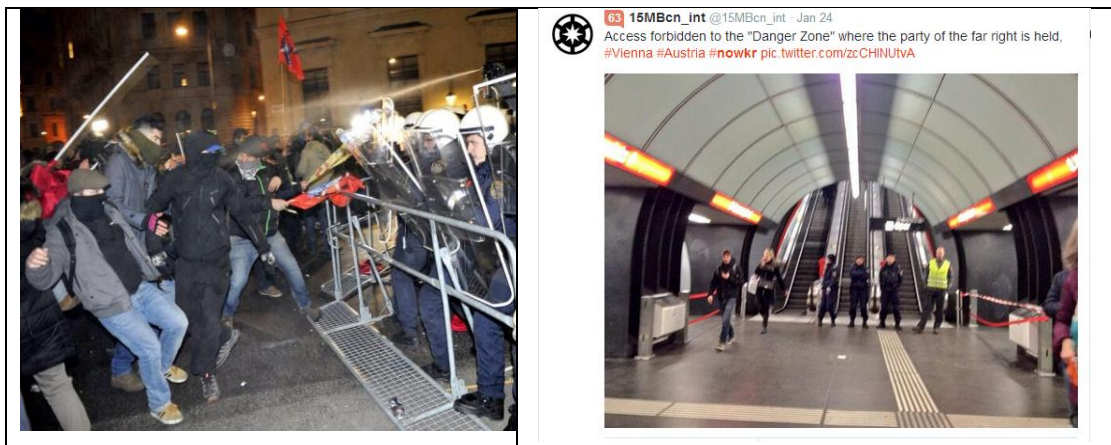


Figure 6. Representations of activity: Disguised demonstrators opposing the police (left); empty secured city (right).

All these examples contribute to the construction of a complex system of representations that combine geography and communication. As has been illustrated, representations can be analyzed on three levels: territorial representations, representations of location, and representations of activity. Regarding each of these levels separately, the analysis shows that beyond the substance of the representation, multiple conflicting understandings and narratives emerge. The dispersion of understandings of the situation opens in several directions, forming not a straight line of opposition but a complex network of

stories and interests that multiply the possibilities of a shared space that grows as a space of conflict and diversity. These understandings also happen simultaneously and correspond to an extensive, lively political process of negotiation in which the hegemonic understandings are challenged. This is a politicized space.

However, the question of whether these conflicting understandings that meet at the hashtags across the Twitter platform constitute the formed public space has to remain unanswered. Indeed, the cumulative perceptions, encounters, negotiations, and dialogues spread around the social media network might appear to be diverse and democratically healthy. However, these are only the reviews of the perceptions of the users and the contents of their statements; they are beyond their more or less shared understandings and their collective intention of opening the strands of the debate. This analysis also needs to explore certain contextual circumstances and the material conditions within which these representational practices take place. Prior to this, we cannot state once and for all that this is a public space. In the following section, we consider some of these contextual determinations.

Beyond Representations of Place

The rich possibilities of the analysis of representations could misleadingly imply that the diversity, conflict, narratives, and actors could be sufficient to provide an accurate portrait of the public space that is used in the extensive discussion of confronted views, nuanced expressions, stereotypes and exceptions, specificities and generalizations, and maps and activities. However, these representations cannot capture certain aspects of the full picture. Several limitations appear as soon as a critical view aims to contextualize and evaluate the specific conditions of the space in which all these representations adopt meaning, the dynamics of the action and the information flows, or the abstract notion of the cyberspace in which all the communicative activity in its vast range of technological possibilities takes place. This section explores these three aspects that identify the limits of the analysis of representations.

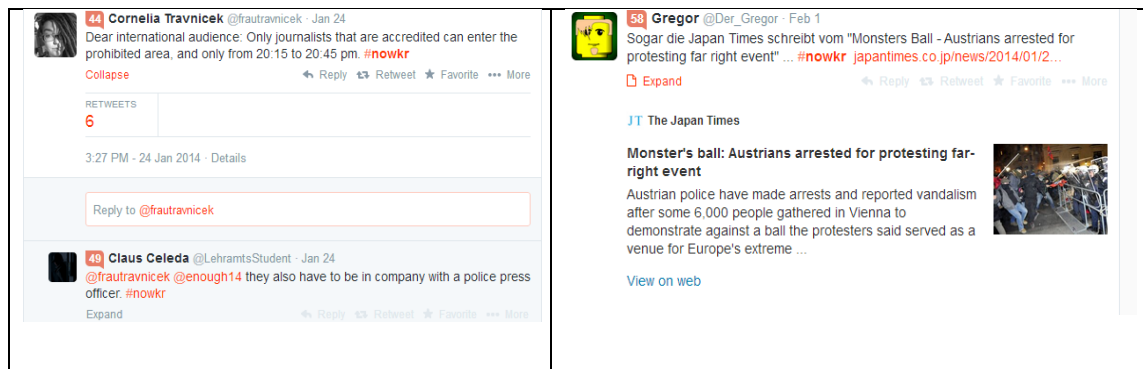


Figure 7. Restricted access for journalists to the blocked area (left); the world is watching (right).

The protests against the Akademikerball happened around a particularly significant place in the city—the very heart of Vienna; the gathering of citizens did not happen in *any* place but at a highly symbolic location in the city near the Hofburg. Whereas on multiple occasions of protests, the occupied places form the central territory of importance, in the case of the Akademikerball, the protests were forced to occur on the margins of the meaningful space. The Square of the Heroes (Heldenplatz) was an emptied place surrounded by security measures and accessed only by participants in the ball and the taxis bringing or picking them up. Even the press, as one of the tweets complains, needed specific accreditation and had to be accompanied by the press-related police officer to enter (Figure 7, left). The demonstrations, riots, and texting took place around this central area of strong meaning. Streets, avenues, people, and traffic created a dynamic space of interactions, communications, and expressions, thereby contributing to the construction of a form of community, but the analysis of representations cannot reach this stage of understanding. In this sense, the location communicates by and in itself and does so by expressing the symbolic value of the event (Rodriguez-Amat & Brantner, 2014). The places are thus communicative resources in their own right.

Therefore, protests against certain uses of public space become another means for instigating a discussion about the ownership, rights, and uses of the spaces, and the analysis of representation would not be sufficient. Instead, the method of analysis should also find ways to identify how patterns of communication are enacted and negotiated in places and how they form what Farman calls a “sensory-inscribed body” (2012, p. 19). The assumption is that places are considered media in their own right and function as storytellers. This is what the analysis of the *textures of place* could provide, and this is how the mode of analysis of representations of place would situate any representation without letting the place state its own message. Spatial and material turn refer to “a view of communication as implicitly grounded, embodied and situated” (Adams & Jansson, 2012, p. 309). The analysis of textures would help to address the limitations of the discourse-situated analysis of representations.

During the Akademikerball, the centers of action, the areas of unrest, and the hot spots are clearly marked by police security. The activity and the communication flows are framed in certain street areas. These communication networks in the city are strongly marked by a curfew and the security conditions that establish a large area at the center of the city map without communication flowing. Several streets are also given priority as channels for the demonstrations of disagreement and outrage. For example, the presence of police, as visualized in Figure 6, limits the flow of information. The streets and urban walls also define the conditions for the performances of the actors: police, demonstrators, media, photographers, tweeters, and bloggers. Security measures work as a hegemonic and coordinated system of invisible structures.

These structures refer to the channeling of information flows. The structures of the communication construct a space that is flooded by information and other spaces in which the information does not flow. Analyzing the *structures of space* helps to define inequalities and power relations between those with “network capital” (Urry, 2007) “who are able to move and connect freely, and those without” (Adams & Jansson, 2012, p. 311). Media structures help to identify the frames of action: centrality, marginalization, density, and penetration—a whole relational space of interaction inside the absolute space. Communication works as a semifixed flow of patterns that are unevenly defined and steered by

telecom markets and geographies of communication. The cultural production is also markedly situated, localized, and spatialized by “the architecture of dissent, the ways in which the physical structures and flows of a city directly affect the ability for people to gather, coordinate and maintain visible social movements” (Sadowski, 2014, para. 3) and by virtual structures such as interfaces, password-walled software platforms, surveillance vans, and signal-jamming devices (Figure 8, left). The analysis of representations cannot provide the broad view of circulating information that marks flows and densities, processes and dynamics; still, the notion of public space needs to consider these conditions—the *structures of space*—too.

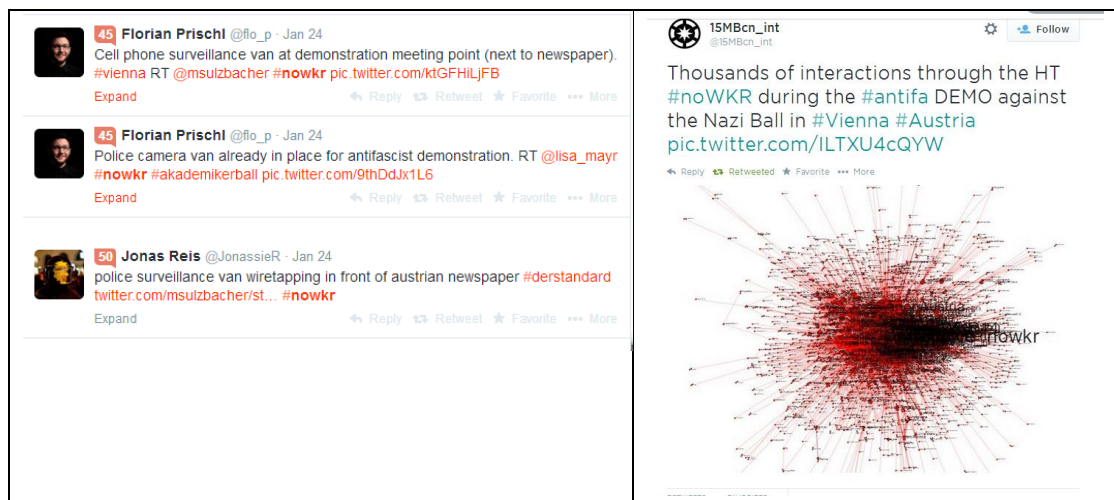


Figure 8. Public space also means the channeling of information and its extension: Tweets refer to police surveillance that structures space (left) and to connectivity of space (right).

Furthermore, the public space must also include the range of communicative possibilities beyond the perception of the users and beyond the descriptive channeling of the process. The public space has to incorporate the potential of its broadness and the material and technical possibilities that enable it. Demonstrators on the streets and reporting by the daily press, by live virtual social networks, and by real-time streaming channels form myriad connections that constitute an (imaginary) space that representations of place cannot grasp. All these links challenge what Sassen (2006) called the fire-walled centers of private digital space that concentrate economic power in a few global transactions. The interaction of physical and virtual spaces constructs an imaginary territory of possible networked connections and conquered spaces of decentralized political power (Adams & Jansson, 2012; Rodriguez-Amat & Brantner, 2014). These spaces are structures of opportunity, expectations, and systems of connectivity.

Connections of space work as an analytical mode that completes the analysis of representations because this mode brings together the multiple and dispersed narratives of represented places into a single, complex, and extensive field of interaction. In this sense, social network sites such as Twitter combine with the physical communications field and establish a connected geography of space that relates

representations with the world, for instance, through references to international audiences and media (Figure 7). The network visualization provided by a tweeter (Figure 8, right) also shows this connectivity. The possibilities these connections generate establish a sort of absolute space across which any human interaction and any content are possible. The notion of connections provides a new understanding of what protests mean in terms of the political struggle for communicative spaces.

The range of representations of place does not constitute the complete public space. Nevertheless, the identified limitations can also be theoretical and methodological opportunities to identify key features of the public space and to orient aspects of its analysis.

Conclusion: Toward the Analysis of the Public Space

Our research concerned the question of whether the public space is what the citizens make of it through their understandings. The purpose has not been to ask them what they believe the public space is but to analyze through their communicative practices what public space they have built. We have analyzed the representations of space available in Twitter posts that included the hashtags #nowkr, #wkr, and #akademikerball.

This analysis has identified three main categories: territorial representations, representations of location, and representations of activity. These categories and their respective subcategories have shown a multiplicity of emerging narratives related to the geographic context of the events. Many notions of Vienna, including the maps of the monuments at its center, are presented in the representations of territory. The analysis of location showed several narratives that represent a city center and the tourist attractions under the stressful conditions of exceptional security measures. Furthermore, the representations of activity referred to a conglomeration of images of the city torn by the tensions between an elegant and secure city and the ironic references to the Third Reich; a city arising from the peacefully protesting masses flooding the streets at night and uniformed antiriot police against masked protesters; and an empty and secure city blocked by the police.

These three main categories provide a methodological opportunity for further analysis of representations of place because beyond their specific content, representations of the territory, representations of location, and representations of activity are classifications that help to organize the emerging understandings of place that are represented across the communicative flows.

Whereas the findings show a wide diversity of representations, the specific message that is embodied by the place in itself, the processes and communication flows, and the space of enabled communicative possibilities cannot be analyzed by observing only the representations. Therefore, the analysis of the representations of place cannot provide a complete understanding of the notion of public space.

Instead, the textures of place, and the structures and connections of space are also necessary dimensions to consider for a more complete understanding of the public space. The textures provide the material conditions and the historical and transcendental value of the spatial context in which the activity

takes place. The connections open the imagined space of possibilities, while the structures provide perceptions of the communication flows and the channels across which the communication is permitted, enabled, and blocked. Structures could thus suppress the diversity of the representations because they reveal the material and the technological constraints on freedom of expression in the newly conquered spaces of action. Almost invisible structures—devices that alter the signal for online connections, technological circuits of geolocating devices, fire-walled access to shared software platforms, and regulations affecting the uses of devices such as cameras in the public space (see the aforementioned case of Spain [Congreso, 2014])—combine with more visible measures, such as the abundance of police and blockades of central streets and public transportation, to govern the communication process. These operations bring to the surface a discussion about the regimens of production of meaning set by technological environments. Langlois (2011) refers to the concept of semiotecnologies, which she derives from Guattari's mixed semiotics, as a framework that "allows for a more refined understanding of the interplay between language, cultural practices, representational technologies and non-linguistic, informational processes that make sense of and organize the plurality of online communications" (p. 2).

Such a significant exemplifying role of the structures in conditioning the meanings and configurations of place and space enhances the idea that the analysis of representations (of place) could be misleading for the understanding of the features of the public space. A good example of this is how the apparent dispersion and diversity provided by the range of representations available in the communications might lead to the thought of a healthy democratic process of public debate, whereas the analysis of the structures shows the hegemonic and undiscussed measures that channel these communications (for example, the security arrangements that cause difficult conditions for the protesters' activity). The public space must be understood as the configuration of diversity (representations), the configuration of constraints (structures), the context (textures), and the possibilities (connections). Without considering these four elements simultaneously, any analysis of the public space might be insufficient and misleading.

This article contributes theoretically and methodologically to the understanding of the notion of public space as defined from the perspective of the governance of communicative spaces. Even if the analysis of the representations of place does not provide a full view of the public space produced across the communication processes during the demonstration, the additional modes complete it by providing a fresh understanding of the features that constitute the notion of public space and how it should be empirically approached.

As explained above, the notion of communicative space includes power structures and processes that participate in its definition and functioning. Research on the governance of communicative spaces, then, aims to identify the mechanisms that enable these power processes and the forms in which they are established. The analysis of representations described here has shown several forms of power intervening in the representations of place as (re)presentations of reality and as sites of action.

Moreover, methodologically, this article has contributed to the research on the governance of communicative spaces because it has provided useful categories for the analysis of representations of place that can be used in further research: representations of territory, representations of location, and

representations of activity. However, this research has also critically discussed the limitations of the representational analysis and, by doing so, has pointed to three additional areas that open up opportunities for further empirical research on public space. The textures, structures, and connections have provided some insight into how they also need to be empirically approached to fully grasp the communicative space and its governance.

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