

## **New Urban Players: Stratagematic Use of Media by Banksy and the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement**

PAOLA MONACHESI<sup>1</sup>

MARINA TURCO

Utrecht University, The Netherlands

In this article, we focus on two urban players whose ultimate aim is to regain public space both in the digital and the urban context: the street artist Banksy and the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement. These two apparently very different players in fact present similar characteristics and operate in similar ways: They engage with the “glocal” playground of the city, where digital and physical space are tightly interconnected, using media in *stratagematic* (playful, shrewd, unorthodox, and improvised) ways to recreate public space, where conflicting views can be confronted, an essential element of democracy. The article complements current literature on urban activism by highlighting the relevance of the spatial dimension in the emergence of a new public that opposes dominant institutional and corporate actors.

*Keywords: urban space, social media, mobile media, Banksy, Hong Kong Umbrella Movement, street art, social movements*

Electronic communication and information systems have contributed to the dissociation between spatial proximity and daily functions. However, despite the predictions of many, technological development has not meant the end of the city (Couclelis, 2007). On the contrary, we witness the emergence of global cities that integrate local hubs in a global network (Castells, 1996) and become power centers in the organization of the world economy being home to financial sites and services (Sassen, 1991). It is in the city that the fusion of the physical and digital dimensions is most evident: It is mediated by the extensive use of mobile media and location-based services that allow city dwellers to be connected to local and global networks.

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Paola Monachesi: P.Monachesi@uu.nl

Marina Turco: M.Turco@uu.nl

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The urban space is increasingly dominated by institutional actors and by global capitalism (Lefebvre, 2003), which have appropriated public spaces in the physical and digital dimensions (Morozov, 2011). We witness the need to go beyond the privatization carried out by the global players and to recreate public space: It is an agonistic space (Mouffe, 2005) where subjects with conflicting views and interests can coexist and compete with each other, leading eventually to the creation of new civic subjects (i.e., communities) and political subjects.

In this context, the city becomes a playground where multiple players exploit communication and the hybrid spatial dimension in which mobile media operate in a *stratagematic* game. We borrow the adjective from Fuller and Goffey (2012), who underline the role of stratagems in all forms of action and mediation against a dominant tendency to view media simply as strategic responses to a need. A strategic perspective on media use implies that we understand media as means to pursue our goals, following a well-defined program. Yet, because of the multiplicity of projects and players present in a given environment, conflicts inevitably emerge, and the processes adjust to each other in an improvisational, unpredictable way. It is at this point that stratagematic actions are activated: They do not follow a predefined path, but improvise a trajectory across the hybrid spaces—physical and digital, local and global—that are created by mobile and social media. As Fuller and Goffey (2012) explain, stratagems are “operative constructs” that do “not describe or prescribe an action that is certain in its outcome” (p. 21). They produce side effects and unforeseen consequences that can be, in turn, stratagematically exploited by players (more or less intentionally) to reach, define, adapt, or change their goals. Therefore, the stratagematic perspective we take in this article is different from a strategic and from a tactical perspective. From a strategic perspective, civic or political players (or a combination) act in a way that may or may not lead to success (see, e.g., Jasper & Duyvendak, 2015). From a tactical perspective (de Certeau, 1984/2011), players could be seen as a form of counter-power that resists the dominant neoliberal system by escaping and boycotting it, without being able to trigger real political change (see Mouffe, 2013; Srnicek & Williams, 2015).

In this article, we consider two players and their stratagematic actions that shed light on the processes through which public space is created: Banksy, with street art performances, and the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement (HKUM). The two cases we consider allow us to test our hypothesis that these players recreate public space by exploiting the communicative and spatial dimensions (physical and virtual) through (mobile) media. To this end, we assess the characteristics of the players and the nature of their actions, and we rely on existing newspaper and academic articles, videos, films, and interviews for our analysis. We follow Flyvbjerg (2011) in assuming that case studies are useful both for generating and for testing hypotheses because they focus on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena. Furthermore, they can provide reliable information about the broader class to which the cases belong, depending on the strategic choice of the cases (Flyvbjerg, 2011): It is for this reason that we have considered two apparently very different players that come from two different domains. By showing that they exhibit similar characteristics and act in similar ways, we create the basis for generalizations to be made: These players strive to reconquer civic (and physical) spaces of action, and in doing so they become a public—heterogeneous collectivity of social actors that interact within the same public domain. Their actions and their existence as a public are ephemeral and unstable. Movements and the groups participating in art projects disappear, break up, or, when they are institutionalized, change

their very nature, becoming new institutional actors. Yet, it is precisely this temporary character that allows the players to react to the structures of control, opening up a new space of autonomy. We show that a common feature of these two players is that they create an opening, or a void, from which new possibilities emerge because they (often provisionally) invalidate norms and structures without immediately substituting them with new ones. This void functions as a positive space that leaves room for new actors to emerge and for unforeseen actions to be performed (see also Massey, 2005, and the notion that space is always in the process of being made).

The players we consider can be viewed as cases of urban activism and social movements. Our work complements current literature on social movements that is based on the relations of language, media, and social structure (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, 2015; Cammaerts, Mattoni, & McCurdy, 2013; Diani & Mische, 2015; Gaby & Caren, 2012; Gerbaudo, 2012) by adding a spatial dimension, which is often neglected (see also Rodman, 1992). However, it is important to consider this dimension for a more comprehensive understanding of these various forms of activism and their impact on civil society because spatiality is an intrinsic dimension of the human (see Harvey, 2006; Merleau-Ponty, 2004; Soja, 2010) that affects social interaction (Hillier, 1996). To this end, we bring together existing literature on space production with that on social movements and mobile media. We take the definition of social movements from Diani and Mische (2015), who consider them as “collective action fields which are localized relational arenas characterized by mutual orientation, positioning and joint actions among multiple kinds of actors engaged in diverse forms of collective intervention and challenge” (p. 307). In this view, local and global contexts, and therefore the spatial dimension; (symbolic) processes of identity forming; the technology as a complex, multilayered environment are the fundamental elements shaping movements (Cammaerts et al., 2013; Earl, Hunt, Garrett, & Dal, 2015; Milan, 2015; van Laer & van Aelst, 2010). We consider Banksy’s art as a form of activism or “critical art” (see Mouffe, 2013)—it produces a symbolic space that functions as a political space—and the HKUM as a political movement that produces a symbolic and an operative space, which is a space that enables political change and the rise of new political subjects. In this article, we do not focus on the historical development of the relationship of art, politics, and activism, but we consider instead a specific period in time and the new type of mediated actions that occur in a hybrid urban space.

In the rest of this article, we introduce the characteristics of the “glocal” playground, and we provide a description of the players that operate in it. We show that despite their apparent differences, they exhibit several common features. Finally, we present some examples of stratagematic actions carried out by these players in the urban space and their effects that aim to reconquer public space. Even though the repercussions of these actions might go beyond the urban space, we limit our analysis there because it is in the city that the integration of the physical and virtual dimensions through mobile media is the most visible and effective and therefore an obvious starting point for our study.

### **The City as Playground**

As argued by Castells (1996), space is the expression of society, and society is based on flows that represent processes dominating economic, political, and symbolic life. He distinguishes between the space of flows, which is the location of power, and the space of places, which is the location of experience.

The former has an impact on the latter, and it alters the meaning and dynamic of places. The effect is evident in cities, where the two spaces are closely connected, triggering a top-down model of urban development in which public space is disappearing due to speculative processes and privatization (Ng, 2014). We follow Lefebvre (2003) in assuming that globalization and neoliberalism have—in general—privileged the production of space for consumption and supported a form of urban development that turns space into commodities. This privatization of spaces exhibits similar patterns across cities: City centers are becoming an ambiguous territory where the line that separates public spaces from private is extremely fine because public spaces are becoming more like entertainment venues than places to meet, discuss, and protest (Belli, 2014). However, (public) physical space is crucial because it structures copresence and interaction patterns of people that ultimately give rise to communities (Hillier, 1996). There are two mechanisms that allow for social relationships between people: (a) sharing the same local world and coming together in physical space (spatial solidarity), and (b) shared interests or goals that may overcome or transverse boundaries of physical space (transpatial solidarity; Hillier & Hanson, 1984).

The privatization of public spaces in the city, which have been taken over by shopping malls and business centers, has run in parallel with the emergence of new digital spaces where people can come together on the basis of their interests and goals. Thanks to the Internet first and the rise of social media later, people have used this space of flows for their own purposes (e.g., sociality, family, relationships), in contrast to its previous configuration as a location of power (Castells, 2012). The Internet can be seen as a surrogate for anonymous public space, initially detached from physical space, where people can create their own identities and constitute new forms of transpatial solidarity through online discussion forums and communities of interest. Social networks have increased possibilities even further; however, in this case, the key to success is not anonymity, but self-presentation leading to a self-constructed network society based on perpetual connectivity (Castells, 2012).

In this context, mobile media such as smartphones and tablets along with location-based services have opened new dimensions of integration between the space of flows and the space of places in cities. Experience in physical space is currently often mediated and affected by mobile devices that become experience markers, as argued by de Waal (2013). He says that these devices can be used to record urban experiences at a specific location and to share them with others that are not present (e.g., sharing photos with location tags), extending the experience of a place beyond the physical and temporal dimensions. At the same time, he proposes that these media can influence the way we experience urban areas, so they can be seen as territory devices, or appliances or systems that can influence the experience of an urban area. People at a given location can retrieve the data linked to the place and assess who was there before them and the stories or memories others have associated with that place (see also Spohrer, 1999). As argued by de Souza e Silva and Firth (2010), mobile media allow people to communicate while moving through physical space, causing a change in the traditional model of networks because nodes (i.e., people carrying devices) become mobile. Mobile media give structure to local participation (spatial solidarity) by allowing the same local world to be shared and to help people come together in physical space. At the same time, the local experience is often projected globally because mobile devices link city dwellers to a global communication network. More generally, mobile media play a role in mediating relationships by, for example, maintaining and extending social contacts despite temporal and spatial barriers in cities (Wallis, 2013) or in the way that they control, modify, and mediate face-to-face

interpersonal interactions (de Souza e Silva & Firth, 2010; Farman, 2012). In the field of protest and activism, this role in mediating relationships has been addressed by considerations of both the emancipation and control that mobile media enable (see Neumayer & Stald, 2014). They facilitate emancipation (Cammaerts et al., 2013) during political actions by helping to mobilize and aggregate activists (Diani & Mische, 2015; Gerbaudo, 2012) and to coordinate spontaneous protest events and actions (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, 2015; Jun & Hui, 2010), and they also facilitate civil and political participatory behavior (Wyatt, Katz, & Kim, 2000). However, mobile media also facilitate control by authorities (Leistert, 2013; Morozov, 2011) because information becomes traceable.

In this article, we do not explore further the role of mobile media in mediating relationships, but we focus on their role in mediating spaces, especially the way that players exploit the media to perform stratagematic actions that can give rise to new spaces and new communities. The spatial dimension is often ignored in the literature on media and social movements because it highlights mainly the communicative aspects. However, space plays a fundamental role in the transformational processes of reality: Harvey (2006) considers space not as an entity where processes take place, but as an entity defined by the production of processes—in our case, stratagematic actions. According to Soja (2010), there is a strict interaction between social and spatial phenomena because human beings live in a spatial dimension in addition to social and temporal dimensions. Space is a social product: Spatial phenomena influence social phenomena (Hillier, 1996) and vice versa (Castells, 1996; Massey, 2005). Spatiality is an intrinsic dimension of the human: “Our relationship with space is that of a being that dwells in space relating to its natural habitat” (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 55). We argue that by taking the spatial dimension into account, it becomes possible to understand the relation between the actions of players and the rise of new political subjects.

New technologies affect the ways people live in cities because activities such as socializing, trading, and consuming are increasingly occurring in digital space. There is a blend of physical and digital spaces that spurs changes (Castells, 2012; Farman, 2012) and gives rise to an augmented space created through virtual interactions intertwined with embodied ones in actual physical space. In fact, smartphones have made this space even more fluid. The city becomes a glocal playground in which local publics, forming groups of interest, can converge with similar groups in physical urban space and can simultaneously interact with other people in other parts of the world because social media offer the possibility to create virtual meeting points. The possibility to call for spatial and transpatial solidarity at the same time is embedded as a default affordance of smartphones, which have location-based interfaces and global social media as part of the same device. We show that this glocal playground is of fundamental importance both for political movements and for street artists because they can connect locally to plan and carry out stratagematic actions influencing local processes while simultaneously projecting these actions globally to connect with other publics (see also Bennett & Segerberg, 2015). For example, in the case of the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement, many people from Hong Kong studying or working abroad or even people sympathetic to the actions supported the movement through social media, especially Facebook (Barber, 2014). Similarly, many of Banksy’s recent projects connect distant participants and weave together physical and digital spaces.

Following Queisner (2014), we could argue that it is precisely the rise of mobile and locative media that has put physical space back at the center of political and cultural action. These technologies make the control of physical space easier, and at the same time provide city dwellers with new tools of emancipation and communication. The players we consider use (mobile) media to recreate public space in the physical dimension also, as the media facilitate the occupation of urban strategic and symbolic locations. This is particularly evident in the case of social movements, as discussed by Castells (2012). He claims that occupied space plays an important role for three reasons: It creates a community based on togetherness, which is a way to overcome fear (e.g., the use of barricades or walls to define the inside and outside of a specific social territory); it lends symbolic value to the place as a way to reclaim the city; and it functions as public space where a community can be formed.

Therefore, we view the urban space as a glocal playground where visible and invisible interfaces of control by institutional and private actors reduce its functioning as public space. We focus on the concept of a playground because we want to highlight the spatial dimension in the two cases that we consider. More specifically, we use the game metaphor to analyze the players and the spaces in which they operate because the actions they carry out rely on stratagems that are based on playful and unexpected uses of media in the virtual and physical spaces.

### **Urban Players and Their Stratagematic Actions**

The players we analyze in this article act against the mechanisms of control that are applied both to digital and to physical spaces, especially those that are connected with digital networks by means of mobile media. It is the complexity of the (urban) glocal playground that offers many new, unforeseen possibilities for action in between and across the layers that constitute each sociotechnological environment.

The games of emancipation by means of which citizens engage to regain public space (both physical and digital) are extremely diverse, yet they can be subsumed under two main strategies: The players create new civic networks, outside or within the institutional ones (e.g., using networked environments and models other than the Internet), or they hack the existing networks, escaping their mechanisms of control or turning them to their own advantage, as in the case of Banksy, who hacks the art world's institutional networks. We have hypothesized that the actions carried out by the players we consider in this article are of a stratagematic nature (Fuller & Goffey, 2012). They do not follow a predefined path, but improvise a trajectory across the many layers of the media environment. They allow players to escape the control exercised by dominant corporate and state organizations that hinders the democratic competition between political and civic subjects with conflicting interests. However, before showing how these stratagematic actions of emancipation unfold, it is important to identify the characteristics of the players in our case study.

We consider two apparently very different players: the British street artist Banksy and the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement. Even though these players act in different urban contexts and social fields, they share a common ultimate aim: to reclaim city space (albeit temporarily) that is not perceived as public anymore. Both adopt the two strategies mentioned above (creating new networks and hacking the old

ones) and operate within the hybrid space of the glocal city with the aim of reshaping this space in a way that would meet their needs.

Castells's analysis of movements (Castells, 2012) provides us with a layout that we adopt to characterize these new civic actors. According to Castells, movements are networked, multimodal (online and off-line), global and local, spontaneous, viral, leaderless (see also Bennett & Segerberg, 2012), self-reflective, and nonviolent. We add another important aspect that characterizes these players (individually or as a group): anonymity. It should be noted that Castells (2012) stresses the importance of self-presentation in social networks and implicitly also in the movements that originate with the help of social networks (see also Bennett & Segerberg, 2012), even though this is a practice that facilitates control and in some cases hinders collective action (Poell & van Dijck, 2016). We argue instead that in the field of civic actions there is a move away from self-presentation toward anonymity. Anonymity fosters viral diffusion, helps to elude control, and, most importantly, allows participants to act as a collective. This collective behaves as a single player in fighting a common enemy (neoliberalism or a dictatorial regime); yet, it is composed of different political subjects (Mouffe, 2013) and includes individual participants without a clear political affiliation. On the one hand, as in the case of the hackers' group Anonymous, anonymity prevents their "assimilation and neutralization by established institutional actors" (Coleman, 2013, p. 16); on the other hand, it gives participants the possibility to evolve or emerge as new political subjects that are shaped by spaces and by their interactions.

In the next sections, we show that all those characteristics have a precise place and function in the stratagematic actions that will be analyzed.

### **Banksy**

The characteristics identified by Castells mentioned above allow us to describe the collectivity involved in Banksy's projects as a heterogeneous group fighting to reconquer public space. In the case of Banksy, the artist's anonymity is a central characteristic that fosters all the other ones. The identity of the British street artist has remained a mystery for more than 20 years: "He" might be a man, a woman, or even a group of people (Capps, 2014). Banksy's anonymity has an operative and a symbolic value: Operatively, it jams the art market mechanisms and shuffles the positions held by different actors within the art world (publics, critics, institutions); symbolically, the artist represents the heterogeneous collectivity of players (i.e., the public) that appropriate, transform, and reinterpret his works and his identity as an artist (Lemieux Spiegel, 2014). By being anonymous, Banksy triggers some of the paradoxes that are implicit in the art market system: His work is valued because of his name, but his name cannot guarantee this value because it cannot be coupled with the ID of a real person. In this case, questions of marketability, authenticity, and ownership arise. In principle, anybody can claim to be Banksy, and many do pretend to be Banksy, by "spot-jocking" his work (Capps, 2014), and because there is no way to determine if one's claim is true, the value cannot be determined on the base of authenticity claims made by experts.

Banksy gives the audience freedom to decide where and how his work will circulate and whether, and at what conditions, it is worth surviving, and in this way, he identifies with and at the same time helps

to create a heterogeneous public. Most of Banksy's pieces created for the New York City residency in 2013, for instance, disappeared in a matter of hours, "either defaced by local graffiti artists who don't like an outsider on their turf, or relocated and preserved to be sold to galleries and collectors by whomever owns the property Banksy happened to choose as his canvas" (Boyette, 2013, para. 5).

The value of the works resides in the effects that the messages produce in the public sphere and in the public or private networks that intersect with the works; it increases independently from the marks of authority typical of the art field (in this sense, his art is leaderless) by virtue of its capacity to mobilize a network of participants. The art dealer and the art critic lose their roles as representatives of a hegemonic art system and become two among the many players who interact with Banksy's works and with each other.

The heterogeneous public that spontaneously emerges when the citizens meet Banksy's works acts in a multimodal, global, and local way, and it spreads virally. During the already mentioned New York City residency, the artist produced a new work each day on a secret spot in the city, each time posting a picture of it on his website. This ignited a frantic hunt for both the work and the artist by a mass of fans, adversaries, art people, and police whose actions unfolded simultaneously online and off-line (multimodally; Moukarbel, 2014). Twitter, Instagram, and other social media served as collaborative hunting tools (territory devices), as places where participants could share information, discuss the works, and give form to and reflect on their own performances (self-reflective experience markers). People were informed about the appearance of a new work or project online and invited to interact with it virtually—for instance, using social media to trace the work and to discuss it—and physically in the space of the city. This public is global and local because it includes those who participate on location and those who follow what is happening through the media; it is viral in the sense that encourages participants to spread the works in the form of imitation, mockery, documentation of its removal, or a selfie-with-Banksy picture on social media. We might even say that the virality of the work, and of the actions themselves, is the characteristic form of persistence of this art form, which is by nature transient and ephemeral (Raychaudhuri, 2010).

The participatory practices around Banksy's work and his anonymity stimulate discourses about the identity and the role of the artist, the public, and the artwork—discussions by a group of citizens that is on its way to becoming, through these processes of self-reflection, a new public. This becomes particularly evident when the artist occupies the very institutional ground that outlawed him in the first place, such as in the 2009 Banksy vs. Bristol Museum exhibition in his home town of Bristol, UK. The show caused a public debate about the role and place of (street) art within the actual institutional and artistic system (Gough, 2012). Finally, the street art player is nonviolent, as he explicitly expresses in many of his works, the most iconic of which is perhaps the stencil of a street protester whose Molotov cocktail morphs into a bouquet (Ellsworth-Jones, 2013). Nonviolence is often a key feature of new civic players of this kind: They operate on the level of play, using art and communication to penetrate the more safeguarded, deeply rooted social and political structures of contemporary society.

The characteristics discussed above allow Banksy to move throughout a multilayered playground that is created by the stratagematic actions themselves and therefore extendable to new players,



relations, and situations. More than art pieces, the works are "operative constructs" (Fuller & Goffey, 2012) that may trigger varying reactions from the participants and, consequently, varying rearticulations of the public space. The operations are carried out in a multimodal way, on both the global and the local playgrounds. They often transform an anonymous spot in a city into a public space of play: After the work is gone, the place that has been created will keep its identity as a potential stage for public action. This stratagematic rearticulation of the playfield acquires a more demarcated political dimension during Banksy's interventions on the walls surrounding the Palestinian territories in the West Bank (2005) and Gaza (2015). Here, like other artists working on the walls (Parsberg, 2006), he needs to break through the controlling and containing function of the physical interface (the wall) and through the virtual interfaces of censure and propaganda. Walls both symbolize and contribute to realizations of control and occupation of space (Kruger, 2014). Street art turns this interface of control into a medium of emancipation, a tool for regaining space both symbolically (through the messages and tags that claim possess of the place) and operatively (making of a private object a public one). On the West Bank wall there are no tags indicating the appropriation of this place by individual artists (Olberg, 2013), but there are messages written by anonymous Palestinian citizens expressing their rage against the Israeli occupation. These citizens form a "network of resistance" (Parsberg, 2006) against the dominant order. In his paintings on the West Bank wall (2005), Banksy reinterprets some of the most popular themes of the Palestinian graffiti, such as the representation of people trespassing the wall and virtual openings in the wall. In one of his murals, we see a policeman who opens a curtain, revealing a beautiful seaside landscape behind it. The trompe l'oeil is a popular subject that can be used to dissimulate the wall so to forget about it (as it happens sometimes on the Israeli side) or to trespass it, scoff at it, or virtually demolish it (on the Palestinian side). In this sense, a simple painting can be an act of resistance, although effective only on a symbolic level.

A fake travel advertisement video (Banksy, 2015) documents Banksy's travel to Gaza in 2015. Ten years after the artist's first visit to the Palestinian territories, the playground of the occupation game has expanded both on the local and global level. Besides the local population, which is in various ways connected to global communication networks, the artist also invites the global players to participate in the game: The Internet public that watches the video on YouTube is for Banksy a group of potential tourists that might want to visit this place "nestled in an exclusive setting (surrounded by a wall on three sides and a line of gun boats on the other)" (Banksy, 2015, [video]). By teasing the spectator, Banksy highlights the discrepancy in how the local public and the global public experience and interpret the works. The stencil featuring a kitten playing with a ball, for instance, is meant to capture the attention of the Internet public that, as we all know, is particularly receptive of images of kittens. The Gaza citizens (the local public), though, do not interpret the work as a sign of the global public's indifference for their cause; rather, they place it in their own context and see it as a representation of the fact that children in Gaza are being deprived of the opportunity to play and of playfulness. The two groups of spectators experience and interpret the stencil differently. Yet, by developing the project throughout a variety of media, Banksy connects distant spectators and spaces, making the two groups aware of each other and of their own position as spectators; he creates a glocal playground where citizens belonging to different communities or living in distant places can confront their standpoints on a common experience.

Unlike the actions by the HKUM or the more direct political activism of graffiti artists during the Egyptian revolution (Abaza, 2013), Banksy's actions take place mainly on the artistic urban playground. The way he hacks the art world's institutional networks, though, and forces his public to engage in a game that always has social and political implications points to what Banksy and the HKUM have in common: the need to recreate public space by triggering processes that have to develop spontaneously to represent authentic change.

Banksy's street art can be seen as an emblematic case of critical art, that is, an artistic practice that makes "visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate, in giving a voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony" (Mouffe, 2013, p. 150). Critical art undermines the dominant hegemonic order and fosters "a variety of agonistic public spaces that contribute to the development of a 'counter-hegemony'" (Mouffe, 2013, p. 151). In this case, the street art project creates an urban hybrid space where the rules established by the (art) market and (artistic) institutions do not apply. We have shown that this space functions as an agonistic space (Mouffe, 2005) where a variety of conflicting political and civic subjects—including new ones and institutional ones—can interact and compete with each other. It is a public space that is configured symbolically and operatively (by facilitating certain operations and actions) through a stratagematic use of media.

### **Hong Kong Umbrella Movement**

The other player we consider is the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement (HKUM). It started at the end of September 2014 as a spontaneous civic protest to fight for genuine democratic elections of the Hong Kong chief executive in 2017. Beijing legally imposed that all candidates for election need preapproval by at least half of the members of the nomination committee, mostly generated by pro-PRC groups. Protesters claimed that under these conditions, elections become virtually nondemocratic. More than 10,000 residents occupied roads in several areas of the city, and the protest was not limited to the urban space but also extended to the Internet.

HKUM shows all the features that we take from Castells (2012) and that characterize the players we analyze. The HKUM was triggered and supported by social media. Communication is always central to social movements, and each movement uses the tools that are available. They are networked through the Internet and mobile communication. In the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement, social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and FireChat played a crucial role in organizing the occupation of the physical space and turning it into a temporary public space (i.e., territory devices) and in recording and sharing urban experience (i.e., experience markers). In particular, FireChat triggered an important shift in social media use because it made it possible to move away from Internet use to stay connected, as we will discuss in more detail. The HKUM is multimodal because it exists online and off-line and is based on a network of networks with no identifiable center and can in this way more easily resist repression. It brings together various groups, including Scholarism, the Hong Kong Federation of Students, and Occupy Central with Love and Peace (OCLP). The first is a group of secondary school students concerned with themes related to education, youth policy, and political reform, and the second comprises members of students' unions of higher education institutions. The last comprises activists of an older generation and has among its key figures Benni Tai, who was the initiator of a civil disobedience campaign at the origin of the HKUM.

The HKUM is an urban movement that demands recognition in public space and at the same time regains a space that is not perceived as public anymore. In this case, the movement started in the Civic Square, then spread over to the nearby Admiralty, and then mixed with the OCLP movement and spread to the business areas of Central District, Causeway Bay, and Mongkok (Lee, 2014). It is a movement that is global and local because protesters connect online and face-to-face: In the HKUM, the physical occupation of the urban space occurred in parallel with the social media activity. Furthermore, the movement was a local phenomenon, taking place in Hong Kong, but thanks to social media, it had a global impact and support. It is through social media that activists exchange information, make themselves heard, and coordinate resource mobilization. HKUM used Facebook mainly, for multilingual updates, but information was spread to Mainland China through Weibo (i.e., the Chinese Twitter) and WeChat (i.e., the Chinese WhatsApp; Tong, 2015). In addition, even though Twitter was not really used to organize the movement internally, it contributed to spreading information about HKUM outside of Hong Kong, as Twitter reported that 1.3 million tweets about Hong Kong were recorded between September 26 and 30, 2014, the beginning days of the Umbrella Movement (Sile, 2015). Rallies to support the movement were organized in at least 64 cities, according to the Facebook page Global Solidarity with Hong Kong (Sile, 2015). Such movements are spontaneous because they usually spark from indignation. In the case of HKUM, the movement started in September 2014 when a protest organized by students escalated into a conflict with the police outside the Central Government offices. This event shows that virality plays an important role: The movement spread to other areas, and through networked communication, it could spread even further, as was the case for the Arab Spring (Castells, 2012). The HKUM can be considered a leaderless movement, even though media have given people's names, such as those of Benny Tai Yiu-ting, Chan Kin Man, Chu Yiu-ming, as the originators of the actions. However, when the conflict broke out, student leaders took media attention, as in the case of Joshua Wong, whom *TIME* put on a cover. Even though leaders have been involved in the discussions with the Hong Kong government, the movement has been characterized in the media as a mass protest. Anonymity was, to a certain extent, also attested in the HKUM, even though it might have been used by necessity and more evident among the older generation. Such movements are usually self-reflective, promoting endless debate, which in the case of the HKUM might have given rise to a split strategy on how to pursue the agenda further, with students insisting on taking to the street and others wanting to change tactics (Lee, 2014). An important feature noticed by Castells (2012) is that these movements are initially nonviolent and then often confronted by violent repression, and their lives often depend on how they respond to violence because they need support from the majority of the population. The HKUM was a positive example in this respect because violence did not break it up; in fact, the movement owes its name to the fact that many protesters used umbrellas to defend themselves from pepper spray and tear gas during confrontations with the police (Lee, 2014).

As already mentioned, to the HKUM, the city is a playground in which to carry out its political actions to fight for democratic elections. These actions are carried out in the business and commercial areas of the city, but they are often planned and organized on the Internet. The Internet plays an important role in such movements, and according to Castells (2012), it represents the culture of freedom. However, this is not the case anymore, and we find evidence in the HKUM. Even though social media have played an important role in creating communities and in supporting the actions at the urban level, in the case of HKUM, we also witness a stratagematic action of retreat from the Internet.

This retreat happened when hundreds of people downloaded the app FireChat when government control was suspected: The roles of chance and improvisation fit the movement's stratagematic way of acting. FireChat was initially developed to support communication during festivals, but it has acquired a special status in protest situations because it relies on Bluetooth, not the Internet. Its connectivity improves if many people are close together (Meyer, 2014) because it is based on mesh networking and allows devices that have equal status, in this case smartphones, to connect to each other, with none of them serving as the router (Namyot, 2015). More than 100,000 people downloaded FireChat in the 24 hours after Joshua Wong asked protesters to do so (Bland, 2014), and 500,000 people installed the app in one week (Rowan, 2015). It is relevant to note that FireChat and mesh networking in general share features with the movements that rely on them: These technologies do not have a central point, and none of the connected devices is a router. In the same way, the movements are leaderless. They are also both local and global. FireChat allows for two modes of connection: local if required or through the Internet if there is the need to move away from a locality. This app is a representative medium for the global playground in which stratagematic actions take place because it bridges local actions and needs, making it possible for users to deceive and evade government control, and it allows for global transmission and broadcasting, if necessary.

HKUM's use of FireChat can be viewed as the result of a stratagematic action whose initial aim was to evade governmental control but whose (unforeseen) consequences could be far reaching: the restructuring of public digital space through the use of mesh networking. The HKUM has not (yet) achieved its political aim to obtain genuine universal suffrage, and it has not emerged as a stable new political subject. However, the 75-day occupation of the business and commercial areas of Hong Kong can be seen as an experiment in the organization of urban space. This space functioned as an agonistic public space (Mouffe, 2005), created through a stratagematic use of media, where a variety of conflicting political and civic subjects could interact and compete with each other, triggering new political opportunities.

### **Conclusion**

Globalization and neoliberalism have privileged the production of space for consumption, drastically reducing the presence of public space, both urban and digital. In this article, we have focused on the centrality of urban space (and its production) in fostering social and political change and especially on the role of public space in its physical, digital, and symbolic dimension as essential for the emergence of political and civic debate. Our analysis is based on cases of two different players: Banksy and the HKUM. We have investigated the effects of their stratagematic actions in the production of public space that allow for a new class of urban civic and political players to emerge.

An innovative aspect of our article is that we do not simply focus on the role of media in fostering connectivity (Gerbaudo, 2012) or facilitating emancipation during political actions (Cammaerts et al., 2013) or on the way they are employed by authorities to exercise control (Dencik & Leistert, 2015; Leistert, 2013; Morozov, 2011). Instead, we highlight their role from a stratagematic perspective. We take into account the spatial dimension in the use of media in addition to the communicative dimension that is usually addressed in the context of social movements: Users exploit the physical and virtual and the global

and local dimensions in which the media operate. Furthermore, the stratagematic actions explore varying and unpredictable ways of exploiting the media that go beyond the standard use for which they are designed, as in the case of the use of FireChat. More specifically, we highlight the role that media, mobile and social media in particular, play in bridging physical and digital spaces, allowing for new political actions in the glocal playground. To this end, we take as case studies two apparently different players in the domains of art and politics to show that they use media and communication in similar ways to evade the control exercised by dominant corporate and state organizations and to recreate and rearticulate public space as a space where multiple political subjects can emerge and compete with each other (Mouffe, 2005).

We consider not only the political dimension of public spaces but also the physical dimension. This is perhaps the most innovative aspect of our work, and it complements current literature on social movements with work on urban space production. The case studies we have considered show that although some public spaces are apparently still present in the city despite increasing privatization, they are not available for citizens to do what they like because these spaces are regulated and are not available for a common purpose. The experiments with the organization of public areas in Hong Kong, the art pieces developed by Banksy, and the use of FireChat by the HKUM show that the players analyzed in this article act as space makers rather than as policy makers because they are able to re-create public space and emerge as a community. It is space that structures the copresence and interaction patterns of people that give rise to communities (Hillier, 1996). Space is a social product (Soja, 2010): Spatial phenomena influence social phenomena and vice versa.

If the spatial perspective is taken into account, the HKUM can be considered successful, even though its actions did not reach the desired result of genuine democratic elections. The movement was successful in giving rise to agonistic (Mouffe, 2005) public space both in the physical dimension, with the occupation of several areas of Hong Kong, and in the digital dimension, through the use of FireChat. It is through confrontations in the public space that political subjects have emerged (even if they are fragmented), and they played an important role in the 2016 Hong Kong legislative elections. Candidates that had a leading role in the HKUM were elected, and 58% of the electorate voted. This is the highest turnout since direct elections were first introduced in 1991, showing the desire for change that was triggered by the HKUM. In the same way, Banksy's performances have transformed spaces structured by institutional players into those where new relationships and players can temporarily replace or reshape existing ones.

In this article, we have shown how Banksy's art projects have produced a symbolic space that can be seen as a political space and how the HKUM carried out political actions through a creative use of media and symbolic communication. Even though their actions set off from different fields (i.e., politics and art), they both include a political and a symbolic dimension and share a common goal: to recreate democratic public space.

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