The Nuit Debout Movement:
Communication, Politics, and the Counter-Production
of "Everynight Life"

Introduction

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This introduction applies a conjunctural approach to contextualizing particular analyses and theorizations of the French Nuit Debout social movement that began in 2016 (and may have ended that same year). It questions social movement research's frames of movement emergence and decline. Integrating popular and alternative media and scholarly treatments of Nuit Debout, it assembles a longer French historical view of forces, repertoires, and aspirations and a broader culturally specific (although particulars are cross-culturally shared) set of developments that inevitably created conditions favoring Nuit Debout's emergence. With regard to one enduring part of the past, Nuit Debout demonstrates a palpably French critique and counter-production of everyday life based in a desire to unleash human creativity while practicing direct democracy and social relationships contrary to consumer capitalist values—shared with other recent, especially leaderless, anti-austerity movements. The introduction then emphasizes the innovative role of media and communication in Nuit Debout before situating each contributing article in the conjunctural context.

Keywords: social movements, Nuit Debout, hacking, activism, alternative media, journalism, critique of everyday life

Plutôt la nuit debout que le jour à genoux (Better to stay up all night than to spend all day on your knees).

—Graffiti slogan associated with Nuit Debout

I live and work in Paris and frequently stop at the Place de la République (Square of the Republic, henceforth "La Place") to have a coffee and read or write, or to meet a friend. But in the spring of 2016, I couldn't help but be attracted by a curious new protest then social movement called Nuit Debout (ND). My research had already dealt with French social movements, protests and resistance, right and left, and on those in revolt that belonged to no party (Harsin, 2015, 2017). When I encountered ND in the first week

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of April, I could not help but make it a further object of study and political inspiration, as I became a periodic participant observer.

I immediately noticed that ND displayed similarities to other post-2011 "movements of the squares," yet it had a distinctive French quality that echoed across decades of French left protest and cultural politics shaped by different contemporary conditions. However, it was ND's communication aspects that interested me most: interpersonal, group, face-to-face, and media technology development and use—all with regard to critiques of contemporary representative or post-democracy. ND, it seemed to me over several months, deserved closer academic scrutiny and comparison with other recent movements of the squares, a scrutiny that can help advance scholars' and perhaps even practitioners' knowledge of communication in social and protest movements. This Special Section aims to do just that: it contributes to communication and social movement research through an analysis comparing ND with other recent movements (and scholarship about them).

This introduction itself aims at once to do what any such introduction to a thematic issue must: provide context for more specific case studies and theories that follow. But contextualization has performative qualities. A context is not there waiting to be scanned and represented in original form. As contextualizations go, this one aims to be more than a recitation of a few trigger events immediately prior to the uprising amid a general local and national mood. It aims to contextualize conjuncturally, and conjunctures provide the conditions for particular responses impossible at another time, under different conditions. As John Clarke (2014) explains, conjuncture "highlights the ways in which moments of transformation, break and the possibility of new 'settlements' come into being" (p. 6). Furthermore, "Conjunctures have no necessary duration (they are neither short nor long), rather their time is determined by the capacity of political forces . . . to shape new alignments, to overcome (or at least stabilize) existing antagonisms and contradictions" (p. 6). Conjunctures are not theories, but orientations: "way[s] of focusing analytical attention on the multiplicity of forces, accumulated antagonisms, and possible lines of emergence from the conjuncture" (p. 6). A conjunctural contextualization thus looks backward at the set of specific cultural and historical threads and causes, tools and inspirations, and their long and short fuses. It also seeks to expand more broadly into cultural, social, political, and economic conditions and relations that might not at first seem related or to have any agency in the production of a movement such as Nuit Debout.

Immediate French Context

All accounts of ND locate its inception in the proposed El Khomri labor law reform, a bill first proposed to the main French legislative body, the National Assembly (l'Assemblée Nationale), on February 17, 2016, by labor minister Myriam El Khomri. The bill, among other things, proposed to make hiring and firing more flexible for companies, reduced the pay scale for overtime work, and weakened the power of unions in negotiating agreements between labor and management in a company (Rubin, 2016). It is now law.

Subsequent to the El Khomri proposal, philosopher-economist Frederic Lordon reviewed François Ruffin's film *Merci, Patron!* (the award-winning documentary critiquing, among other things, a billionaire's

cavalier firing of an entire factory's workforce) in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, "describing the film as a clarion call for a potential mass uprising" (Cervera-Marzal, 2016b,). On March 31, French labor unions organized a march against the law, and riding on that wave of energy, Ruffin immediately organized an inspirational screening of *Merci, Patron!* in La Place. The event was publicized via a new Facebook page, "Nuit Debout," with the marching order, "Let's occupy a Parisian square! Let's spend the #NightStandingUp [la #NuitDebout] to resist and create! Let's meet up on March 31!" (Laurent, 2016, para 1). The emphasis on "resist" *and* "create" is key to ND and perhaps distinguishes its identity from other movements of the squares, a point to which I will return shortly. This call to occupy the square all night, however, had been planned several weeks in advance by members of Ruffin's activist newspaper *Fakir.* ND quickly spread to many (more than 300 at one point) French cities (and some beyond France), though it is important to note that the movement was banned or its members not permitted to protest in other French cities.

Properly speaking, ND was not an occupation. Within the legal constraints of the post–terror attacks' state of emergency, ND could hardly be an occupation, a traditional "taking of space." It was something in between a nightly occupation and a porous gathering. That is, it was not a fixed occupation across days in which people and material objects (tents, stands, etc.) stood their ground. It also was not itinerant. It was cyclical, following the natural rhythm of the moon and the sun, the artificial rhythm of the capitalist and state-regulated everyday—in the same open space through and around which an alternative everynight life flowed.

ND met nightly from March 31 until early May, after which stricter time constraints were imposed, police aggression increased, rainy weather was unforgiving, and wider interest and support waned. A main assembly lasted most nights until 9 or 10 p.m., and other activities and music-driven festivities lasted into the early hours of the morning. In addition, some participants slept in tents on La Place, vacating it in the morning (Quinault-Maupoil, 2016). In a sense, ND's choice to assemble in La Place in accordance with the time restrictions of the permits (usually 6 p.m. to midnight or 1 a.m.; until 10 p.m. later in May) was hard to enforce. Legally, stands and tents could be removed after the permitted time elapsed. However, as Paris's Mayor Anne Hidalgo observed (criticizing the movement), La Place is open to everyone, to free passage and leisure. It has no hourly restrictions, as do parks. Thus, if *deboutistes* loitered or lingered festively after the main assembly or commission, it was difficult to declare that they were a collective illegally occupying La Place. Still, if spillover from the earlier legal gathering was suspected to be a security, public health, or noise problem, the early permit could be revoked. Not even two weeks into ND, mayors of the surrounding districts (the 3rd, 10th, and 11th *arrondissements*) complained that there was chaos, violence, and vandalism in and spilling out of La Place and called for a restoration of order (Apetogobor, 2016).

Yet some analysts prefer to locate the movement in a longer history of struggles, battle cries, grievances, knowledges, and strategies passed down over years, even centuries.

The Longer View

When does a movement begin and end? Timelines are, of course, frames that orient us toward a wider or narrower theory of causation, influences, and repertoires. When one Googles "nuit debout" and

"chronologie" (the French word for "timeline" or "chronology"), the results already point to framing implications; they are mainly (if not exclusively) timelines of the El Khomri labor law and resistance to it. However, as many accounts attest, ND was very quickly about something much bigger than the labor law. Some sources locate ND in a series of protests and resistances to an oligarchy (with national, local, and global faces and facelessness) and its organization of everyday life. Kokoreff (2016), for example, sees it as having an antitraditional political esprit or orientation in common with the French revolts of 1968 but also locates it in a more recent string of related uprisings, beginning in 1995 (retirement and social security reform laws), with other key moments in 2005 (*banlieue* riots) and 2006 (revolts against a labor law known as the CPE especially aimed at young people). In a more transnational protest imaginary, deboutistes also had followed Occupy Wall Street, Tahrir Square, and les Indignados (in fact, some former participants in Occupy and the Spanish 15M movements participated in ND; Avilès, 2016).

In Kokoreff's timeline, French news in winter 2016 was heavily covering the case of eight Goodyear workers who in 2014 had sequestered a manager at the Amiens factory in desperate hopes that they could prevent the factory from closing. In early January 2016 they were sentenced to two years in prison, and marches for leniency followed (Gourmellet, 2016). Beyond France, there were the world Social Forums by *altermondialistes* and the work of the anti-austerity French-based and -founded organization Attac (originally—in 1999—calling for a flat tax on foreign exchange transactions). The ongoing "Zones for Defending" or "Zones to Defend" (Zones à Défendre) movement is also an important contextual predecessor. It is characterized by political squatting to prevent or halt development (since 1971). The 2005 *banlieue* (on the outer rim of Paris) riots might also be given particular emphasis because they represented an ongoing unresolved postcolonial ethnic conflict in France interconnected with police abuse and other discrimination with socioeconomic repercussions (high poverty and unemployment rates; Harsin, 2015; Quiret, 2017). The 2005 unrest deriving from an everyday life that showed little sign of change haunted ND because the banlieue population at the center of the 2005 unrest was framed as excluded from ND (see Chaumier's interview with Ruffin, this Special Section).

ND's position within recent French struggles recalls the importance of movement specificity. From Charles Tilly (1996) to Antonio Negri (2017), theorists of social movements have counseled scholars not to impose "invariant models" on movements but rather to make comparisons between them while attending to their cultural and historical specificity. Consequently, such attention entails rejecting a problematically narrow timeline for ND's public and subterranean development. What further specific aspects of ND must be considered to understand it?

State of Emergency

Crucial is the context of France's war on terrorism and the legal and penal constraints ND faced. After the January 2015 Paris attacks, a state of emergency compromised rights of assembly and circulation. While permission was granted for some assemblies after state approval, those assembling without permits risked fines of 7,500 euros and six months in prison (Gilles, 2015). In France, the right to protest is regulated: Anyone wishing to organize a collective protest must file a request with city hall a minimum of three days and a maximum of 15 days before the event, and the request must be signed by three organizers (Durand, 2016). In addition, the organizers must specify the date, hour, and goal of the

protest. Otherwise, the protest is illegal (with a more severe penalty under the state of emergency). Conservative politicians repeatedly framed ND as a security risk (Pleyers, 2015).

From the end of April, municipal powers issued increasingly stricter conditions for ND's assembly, cutting all tarp- and tent-covered meetings off at 10 p.m. and evacuating La Place in the morning. At the same time, they banned the sale and consumption of alcohol in La Place, partly to reduce the available projectiles for participants to launch at police, as had happened during periodic clashes (Clavel, 2016). These clashes also point to conditions that enabled an aggressive, anxious police force, evidence of which participants and observers on several occasions documented on phones and diffused as activist journalism through social media channels (Feigenbaum and McCurdy, this Special Section; Russell, this Special Section). Key to understanding the repressive situation, the state of emergency shifted power from the judiciary to the executive, which could sanction strong police action in security's name, or as Birnbaum (2016) observes: It transformed political issues into security issues (strategically and paradoxically to achieve political ends, I would add). This strategy, however, could probably not fully succeed without the aid of negative media frames alleging ND violence, attacks on police and on civilian and public property. Furthermore, one cannot put all the blame (and agency) on new and old news media, but the array of innovative DIY counterbroadcasting, diffusion, and discussion platforms were seemingly unable to sway nonpresent mediated audiences, spectators who might have otherwise been transformed into supporters and part of a networked protest public. At least—that is one repetitive narrative perspective (for an example, see Chaumier's interview in this Special Section). Thus, scholars in this Special Section (especially Russell, and Feigenbaum and McCurdy) are, in Nicholas Mirzoeff's (2011) terms, documenting the struggle for "the right to the real," (p. 4) and the attempt to offer countervisualities.

Through what Feigenbaum and McCurdy (this Special Section) stress as a form of reflexivity, state leaders and police adjusted their tactics in dealing with ND over time, including reframing the movement as violent, which was possibly enabled by police institutional policy on letting a minority of protesters vandalize, and cutting them off from ND team sousveillance for a specified amount of time before intervening. A frustrated spokesman for one of the police unions, Alliance, speculated that the government's orders to wait one hour before stopping vandals in marches related to Nuit Debout was a strategy to

> discredit the social and union movement because, certainly, when unions protest a labor reform bill and vandals smash up everything in a neighborhood, neighbors become exasperated if the police can't intervene quickly and that discredits the social movement at some point. (BFMTV, 2016)

Another police union spokesman acknowledged viral videos and photos showing violent or illegal police practices that counterbalanced the reserve they demonstrated on traditional television (Brabant, 2016). Thus, French laws regulating both right to assembly and the state of emergency posed problems for ideals of horizontality, radical democracy and leaderless organization.

Organization, Organizers, Event Planners

Further research and discussion might investigate the degree to which ND and other movements manifest not a singular model or ideology of organization and practice but demonstrate internally competing models and practices. Although, as noted, key individuals and organizations initiated the original assembly in La Place, other major groups supported and enacted ideologies of leaderlessness and spontaneousness. For example, in an interview with Paolo Gerbaudo, self-defined anarchist deboutiste Baki Youssoufou acknowledged considerable disagreements within ND about traditional civil society and representative democracy. "*Convergence des Luttes* (Convergence of Struggles) only represent one part of the movement," he said.

> They think that unions are still the main force capable of changing society, and they work within the political party of the left, Front de Gauche. Many people in the square disagree with that. We distrust both parties and unions because we think that they have also been responsible for the present situation. (Gerbaudo, 2016, para. 5)

As Guichoux (2016) notes, this tension between leaderlessness and the influential minority is present in several movements of the squares, and local legal and historical conditions (such as France's state of emergency) raise particular problems for leaderless political practices. Individuals from ATTAC, Sud-PTT, the newspaper *Fakir*, the collective Convergence des Luttes, and the Association for Right to Housing (l'Association Droit au logement) signed the first request for permission to assemble in La Place. On the other hand, the "exceptional growth and spread of the movement showed, little by little, that it had escaped any control of those who had initiated it" (Guichoux, 2016, p. 47, my translation). In effect, with the help of journalism's individualist frames, in the larger context of representative democracy, there must necessarily be representatives or leaders.

As in Occupy and 15M, the reigning spirit of ND communication practices could be called leaderless, as can the style of governing and politics ND's participants aimed for in practice and celebrated discursively. However, even the legal ability to appear in La Place as an assembly required "organizers" to apply for protest permits from the police. These were the same people whom police ultimately served notice to or warned about disturbances to neighbors, complaints, and violence. If these were the challenges of (anti-)leadership, who were the radically democratic participants?

Participants

There were indeed clear attempts to make ND an articulation of struggles, and not just in rhetorical appeals. On the ground, one could find on most nights portable whiteboards with lists of commissions, organizations, and projects, with contact numbers and times of meetings. State and corporate news and political leaders' (left and right) accounts characterized the movement's participants as privileged young white Parisians or students—insufficiently diverse (Ruffin & Chaumier, this Special Section). The few sociological accounts we have tell a somewhat different story.

Surveys of participant observation were conducted in La Place between April 8 and May 13 by a team of university-based sociologists calling itself "the Collective" (their findings being published in popular venues such as the newspaper *Le Monde*). According to the survey data, half of the ND population in La Place was over 33 years old, and one out of five was over 50. The population was two-thirds men, and 37% came from Paris's banlieues. More than 60% of those in La Place had a post–high school diploma (compared with 25% of the French population). Roughly 20% were unemployed. Two out of three respondents said they had used their voices to address the assembly of participants (Collectif, 2016).

The police, the leaders of the leaderless participants, and the participants all converged in La Place under the contested sign of ND. Movements' labels, chosen from within the movement or dubbed from without, matter. How did ND organize the people and events in La Place (and elsewhere) semiotically?

What Does "Nuit Debout" Mean?

Even for francophones, the term is figurative and particularly open to multiple interpretations. It is therefore a term that resists any simple translation. It literally means "Night" (*Nuit*) and "Standing Up" (*Debout*) and has been translated variously as "Up All Night" and "Standing Up All Night." The French have a common term for "sleepless night" (*nuit blanche*); thus, deboutistes are referring to something different. In many ways, the literal translation of *nuit debout* does not refer to what was happening in La Place at all. It was not people "standing around" (although perhaps a few were). Far from standing around, deboutistes were moving (dancing, acting, playing music) or sitting, taking a mic, using hand gestures to respond, broadcasting, discussing, arguing, listening, and engaging in various forms of art (orchestra, dance, sketch) as producers and audiences.

In this light, the movement was, in fact, more literally a *move*ment, and its label refers much more to "standing up" to power, as opposed to the inactive standing as in "standing around." *Debout*, like "standing up" in English, has a history of use against power. Sophie Wahnich (2016) reminds us:

> In a petition of 1792, demanding the removal of the king's veto power, Parisians declared to legislators before the treason of the high executive: "We hope that our last cry will be felt in your hearts. The people have stood up [*Le peuple est debout*] and are quietly waiting for an answer at last worthy of their sovereignty." (p. 8).

In addition, *debout* is the first word in the world famous left revolutionary anthem, "l'Internationale" (n.d.): "Stand up, wretched of the earth!" (*Debout, les damnés de la terre!*—my translation). The English translation of *debout* in "l'Internationale" is "arise" (Industrial Workers of the World, 1905). *Debout* thus has a history of political signification (as "standing up" does in English) that would resonate for French audiences.

"Night" (*nuit*) is perhaps more obvious because the participants assembled at night (or at least in the evening), first by choice, then by order. Night is both an extra-social, natural, or even planetary phenomenon, about rhythm, light, and darkness. Yet it is also social, or, more accurately, economic. The

day is traditionally for work and night for sleep, preparing to start the cycle again at daylight (Sharma, 2014). Capitalism and the state regulate it in distinctive ways.

In France, "night" bears a specificity that contrasts with the conditions around night protest in, say, Occupy. Work time in France is regulated in ways that it is not in the United States. Many more people in France work during the day and are off in the evening. For example, 24-hour supermarkets or even bodegas are practically unheard of. Most stores are not even able to open on Sunday. Only night businesses or services (such as bars and policing) are at work.[1] Thus, more people are available to protest at night than in the day without losing jobs (even if protesters included many students and unemployed persons), which gave ND a palpable temporality, perhaps more dangerous in several aspects for some participants and, paradoxically, more festive for others. Night was appropriated, stolen from the required rest for maintenance of routines of market-driven daily cycles, and it was also legally imposed in Paris. Mayor Hidalgo agreed to tolerate night assemblies but refused them permission during the day, on the grounds that La Place was a public space of passage and leisure and a memorial (Jérôme, 2016). If there was a resemblance of occupation, it was on the rhythm of the sun and moon, which made questions of eviction rather moot. La Place is not closed at night, and police were not blocked from entering ND gatherings.

Many readers will rightly identify "night" as a gendered time space, recalling the American exported feminist practice "Take Back the Night." Indeed, Sharma (2015) emphasizes the patriarchal aspects of nighttime and warns that inattention to the temporality of social movements will hinder potential solidarity. Feminist deboutistes thus echoed other feminists who have long stressed that night is disproportionately more vulnerable for women (Larriaux, 2016; Sharma, 2015; Zetkin, 2016). Thus, women deboutistes could be said to have stood up in additional ways by assembling at La Place, and indeed, they drew attention to their status in a "convergence of struggles," starting the commission on feminism. Furthermore, they can be viewed as part of a prefigurative sociocultural politics, a *counter-production* of everyday life (more about which below), and, in their transnational movement strategy-sharing, part of a gendered repertoire of contention[2] because they used a borrowed repertoire of strategies to provide security for women (Larriaux, 2016).

La Place de la République

Clearly, then, the square in this genre of recent popular global protests also has singular significance. The original and main ND assembly occurred in La Place, a square in north-central Paris. This marks the first of several ways in which ND corresponds to the "movements of the squares." La Place's dimensions are 283 m by 119 m, approximately twice the size of an American football field. It is less than

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[1] On labor regulations in France compared with those in other countries, see Hamermesh and Stancanelli (2014).

[2] Charles Tilly (1986) originated the term "a repertoire of contention," which includes the "whole set of means [a group] has for making claims of different types on different individuals" (p. 2), though it has since been expanded to mean a variety of historically shifting means available to a movements' contentious politics.

a 10-minute walk from the site of terrorist attacks on French commodified or "everynight" life. It was one site of pilgrimage for thousands of French citizens and curious tourists for several months following the attacks. Photos of victims and memorial wreaths had recently decorated the central statue of Marianne (iconic symbol of French Republican values who holds a tablet of the Rights of Man in one hand and an olive branch in the other), and candles burned through the night. With deliberate irony, deboutistes draped Marianne in a banner rhetorically questioning, "Democracy, where are you?"

La Place is heterotopic in its brevity. Literally, "an other place," Foucault's (1994) coinage suggested a place that connects several places. La Place is not a space designed for assemblies, but for managed play and, sometimes, state-structured political participation, in the granting of protest permits. La Place, already somewhat heterotopic in that skateboarders reappropriate parts of it, is foremost designed to be a monument to French democracy. However, instead of using the protest permit to congregate, bearing banners and chanting slogans protesting the El Khomri law, deboutistes reused the space in three major counterhegemonic ways: (a) for ephemeral counterpractices or prefigurations of democratic politics; (b) for knowledge sharing, discussing, and strategizing (the stands and temporary tents, the commissions, etc.); and (c) for emphasizing the creative, joyful, and ludic side of human being, with productions such as orchestra debout, theater debout, and dance debout—the third category especially serving the crucial emotional functions of bonding, mutual support, and rejuvenation required for sustaining a movement, a protest, and a sociopolitical experiment. All three of these heterotopic aspects of ND in La Place critiqued everyday and *everynight* life through counter-production.

Nuit Debout and Critiques of Representative Democracy

Deboutistes' distrust of traditional representative democratic institutions was stoked by the antidemocratic means by which the El Khomri law was passed. Proposed in parliament in February, it met stiff public resistance in labor and student protests and in polls. In early March, polls measured a strong majority against the proposed law, with 70% of those surveyed having registered their disapproval ("70% des Français," 2016). Nevertheless, against public opinion, the government chose to activate article 49 of the 1958 French Constitution. With the aim of maintaining government stability and circumventing endless oppositional debate, article 49 allows the government to bypass voting and make a bill law, unless a majority of deputies pass a vote of no confidence. After nearly three months of debate, the government lacked a majority of support in the parliament and invoked article 49, prompting widespread cries of a flagrant undermining of democratic process (Prigent, 2016). In late 2017, more than half of those surveyed still favored mass mobilization against the law (Audigane, 2017), and why there was no widespread re-mobilization invites speculative theory.

ND issued a critique of representative democracy through prefigurative[3] politics (Breines, 1982), similar to Occupy and the Spanish 15M movements' direct participatory democracy, debates of issues, and

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[3] According to Breines (1982), prefigurative politics are marked by "the effort to build community, to create and prefigure in lived action and behavior the desired society, the emphasis on means and not ends, [and] the spontaneous and utopian experiments that developed in the midst of action while working toward the ultimate goals of a free and democratic society" (p. 14).

votes sending issues to specific commissions for study and action. Specifically, ND was unique in "use of voting and the timing of speech," as Feldman explains (this Special Section): Speakers had two to three minutes "to state their position and then responses were allowed, in the form of a point-counterpoint debate." Despite some public representations to the contrary, it was not based on strict consensus.

Critique and Counter-Production of Everyday Life

Yet, it is also important to note a particularly French complement to ND's attempts to practice prefigurative politics that could be called a *prefigurative sociocultural politics*. This tradition may be located first in theories of human freedom, creativity, and playfulness (heavily suppressed or colonized by capitalism) that date back to the early to mid-20th century cultural avant-gardes, surrealism through situationism (the latter peaking in the May 1968 uprising).[4] Second, it issues from a precise body of theory embodied in the works of Henri Lefebvre's (2008) three-volume *Critique of Everyday Life* and other oft-cited works, in addition to a variety of (still) widely circulated situationist texts. The latter come from their journal (1958–69) and two classic revolutionary texts, Guy Debord's (1995) *Society of the Spectacle* (first published 1967) and Raoul Vaniegem's *Revolution of Everyday Life*. Lefebvre and the situationists (at one point in collaboration) developed a critique of everyday life colonized by the hypercommodification of social relations and mediated by especially corporate and state entertainment (the spectacle). Phrases from their publications became watchwords, graffitied about Paris and elsewhere in France during the 1968 uprisings and now part of transnational rhetorical repertoires of contention. The answer to the critique of everyday life was to counterproduce it through new social relations, partly by appropriating and renewing existing ones. ND is ultimately incomprehensible without an understanding of this particular French twist.

The critique and counter-production of everyday life (in the appropriation of night, though occasionally spontaneously in daytime) was manifest across a range of reformed social relations and organizations, including those in this translated list, all bearing the suffix "debout": orchestra, choir, dance, ballet, hospital and nursing, library, university and sciences, ecology, lawyers (especially immigration), architects, photographers, and theater. These projects were in addition to official commissions that grew out of discussion of issues in the general assembly: political economy, direct action, discrimination, education, the possible, francophone Africa, the empty electoral vote, feminism, rewriting the Constitution, editing a manifesto. Related to all these parts were the "debate soirees" and film projections. Especially crucial to our work in this Special Section, however, is ND's counter-production of technologically and strategically mediated social and political relations.

Nuit Debout, Communication, and Media

Social movements have a *kairotic* quality with their emergence in response to legal (e.g., El Khomri), security, economic, counterpolitical, and geographical constraints, but they are partly temporally constituted through and by mediatization and mediation (including their own; Mattoni & Treré, 2014), and thus they have peculiarly important media and communications components. Communication research

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[4] On the project of the historical avant-gardes, see Bürger (1984); on situationism, see McDonough (1997).

(especially of mass media's and movements' own frames and rhetorics) on collective action has seen a surge of interest, both empirical and theoretical, in 21st-century digital media, from mobile phones to social media, clicktivism to hacktivism (see, e.g., Bennett & Segerberg, 2014; Castells, 2012; Dencik & Leistert, 2015).

Beyond but including social movement communication, Hepp and colleagues (Hepp, Breiter, and Hasebrink, 2018) emphasizes the way that no domain of society is independent of media today, and many societies can be characterized by deep mediatization, with all of human life (and often nonhuman too) being deeply structured by media, especially datafication. Hepp, Breiter, and Hasebrink (2018) write, "One important implication of deep mediatization is that research has to take on a cross-media perspective" (p. 6; see also Couldry & Hepp, 2016.

In light of deep mediatization, the following contributions concerning ND help develop an understanding of the movement across the whole media environment and in how particular domains (such as policing, journalism, or government opposition) may hack aspects of deep mediatization, influencing particular media-related responses, as when, for example, deboutistes adopted hand gestures to respond to state of emergency policy and hostile neighbors' complaints about noise and sound (or when they organized their own security teams). But hacking contemporary digital media structures also demonstrated what Coleman (2017) has called "weapons of the geek."

ND's battery of ICT tools and weapons ("Communication is our battlefield" [Aviles in Russell, this Special Section]) is impressive and served both centripetal (dispatches that organized and reproduced a core of participants) and centrifugal (broadcasting for informational, rhetorical, and recruitment purposes) networks. Makers and hackers lent their skills to rigging modems to create out-of-the-cloud computing, and participants also used encrypted messaging through the Telegram platform (an alternative to WhatsApp and text messaging). To serve purposes of direct democratic decision making, a maker or hacker developed the app Stig, and other deboutistes used the Loomio decision-making app (the latter item in the repertoire of contention, having emerged out of the Occupy New Zealand movement in 2012 [Finley, 2014]). Deboutistes also mass broadcasted through corporate platforms, creating their own channels with their own form of activist (nonprofessional) journalists. Periscope, YouTube, Twitter became hosts for movement-branded channels on the Debout network that (re-)broadcasted: TVDebout, Radio Debout, University Debout, and so forth. These alternative media served strategies to preempt and counter negative frames issuing from mainstream politicians, government, and journalists. Finally, deboutistes' critiques of alienating, distant representative democracy also resulted in a prefigurative politics that emphasized the virtue not just of inclusive speaking but also of listening. Listening is, of course, easily overlooked, but perhaps especially in the context of deep mediatization, or in other words, in the attention economy, producing and diffusing does not guarantee hearing or listening; these are not even guaranteed face-to-face. Jessica Feldman begins the Special Section by focusing on this understudied issue.

Feldman's contribution, "Strange Speech: Structures of Listening in Nuit Debout, Occupy, and 15M," highlights ND's commonalities with 15M and Occupy (particularly prefigurative aspects), as ND drew from recent transnational repertoires of contention. As Feldman's interviewee explained, participants "had

studied Occupy and 15M from a distance through videos, second hand accounts, etc." Yet she finds that ND was distinctive in one major communication function that then affected others: listening. Drawing from participant observation, interviews, and secondary sources, Feldman concludes that ND differed in important ways from 15M and Occupy in its communication, listening, and deliberation practices.

Feldman arrives at listening by scrutinizing the participatory element, which often goes beyond the promises of self–mass diffusion (not necessarily communication) and realizes communication with a listening audience instead of one that may never hear or read the user-generated content of pseudodemocratic online dispatches. There one has the tools of production but no guarantee of audience attention or will to listen, receive, and process. As one of Feldman's (this Special Section) deboutistes put it: "People are listening to you. You always find an ear. When ND ended, a lot of people were so depressed." On several levels, ND and its cousins demonstrate the contemporary paradox that the whole world could be watching (and listening), but thanks to deep mediatization, algorithms, and the simultaneous glut and targeting of information and appeals, it takes viral circulation and intermedia (no longer just between news organizations but between media forms and platforms) agenda setting to reach those precious ears and eyes. The following contributions explore ND's negotiations with and small triumphs and failures against deeply mediatized everyday and everynight life.

Exploring ND's creative use of ICTs through interviews and secondary sources, Adrienne Russell's contribution, "Nuit Debout, Media Technologies, and Prototyping Change," builds on her previous work on journalism and activism. Here she focuses on how hackers and makers developed tech and on how participants appropriated corporate broadcasting platforms such as Twitter and Periscope for internal and external communication and for new activist journalism with an emotional or affective dimension.

The relationship of digital platforms and communication technologies to social movements and collective action is an ongoing source of debate in scholarly and popular circles, but according to Russell, "much of the effort of activists involved in movements such as ND focuses on connecting, informing, representing, and monitoring sources of power." Russell argues that tech-savvy activists in ND and cognate actions perform the "watchdog work traditionally carried out by journalists, albeit with new practices and tools." Russell discusses three main ways that ND activists "used media to disrupt power dynamics": for representation, affect, and prototyping. Furthermore, she argues that the work is "practical . . . visionary and driven by local issues and transnational connections." In this sense, Russell's contribution also answers John Postill's (2014) call to study not just the technologies and their roles in social movements but also what he calls "freedom technologists" (p. 203).

Sociologist Serge Chaumier's interview with ND coinitiator and celebrity leftist François Ruffin ("Toward a Creative Activism with a Sense of Humor: An Interview with François Ruffin") exemplifies aspects of what Russell (2016) has recently explored in her book *Journalism as Activism*: Ruffin, besides being an award-winning documentary filmmaker and now member of the French parliament, is above all an activist journalist, as founder of the activist newspaper *Fakir*.

Ruffin is highly critical of, at once, allegedly boring and status-quo-accepting traditional journalism and allegedly boring and melancholic traditional left activism (led by unions). He argues that

activism needs storytelling, not simple revelation and (expert) explanations, the latter lacking a "human touch." On the other hand, some may find Ruffin's denunciation of "explainers" to echo the right-wing populism behind Brexiteers such as Michael Gove: "the people are tired of experts." It appears then that contemporary distrust of experts needs a deeper unpacking in our analyses. It cannot simply be reduced to nation and culture (Hofstadter's anti-intellectualism in the United States), to class, or to ideological position. Experts, including unions, are seen as out of touch with the people and processes they analyze and theorize and also perhaps do not problematize enough their privileged place as spokespersons for people who would more often like to speak for themselves. On the other hand, activist-cultural producers such as Ruffin may see their cultural strategies as giving voice to instead of just speaking for. It implies a self-critique of advocacy, of speaking on behalf of another.

Like Russell, Anna Feigenbaum and Patrick McCurdy emphasize innovative uses of new communication technologies as part of what they call "reflexive activist practice" in their article "Activist Reflexivity and Mediated Violence: Putting the Policing of Nuit Debout in Context." Reflexive activism incorporates a kind of constant inward and outward ongoing assessment, using communication technologies to counter dominant media frames, countermonitoring police, and related to the latter, documenting police violence and circulating it as part of "public education." Big data gathering and analytics are not just left to those with disproportionate power (the state, police, corporations, well-placed reactionary citizens). They call this counteruse or appropriation of the usual corporate-state monopoly on the means of data gathering and predictive analytic violence "civic forensics."

ND's broadcasting its own frames was crucial to its development, especially in the context of the police repression on which Feigenbaum and McCurdy focus, because public emotion toward police had received heavy priming over the previous few months; police had been heroically framed since the *Charlie Hebdo* terrorist attacks.

Feigenbaum and McCurdy explore three classes of reflexive practices:

1. Challenging media representations: adaptations and innovations that respond to dominant media framing of police–protester relations.
2. Sousveillance and police monitoring: the recording and monitoring of police violence and the public education around police use of force.
3. Civic forensics and data aggregation: the gathering, analyzing, and collectivizing of citizen-generated data to put formal pressure on authorities.

Bratich's contribution, "From Social Movement to Social Rest: Recuperation in Occupy Wall Street, Nuit Debout, and Other Contemporary Struggles," written through the theoretical optic of autonomist social theory associated with the influential thinkers Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, poses provocative questions for theorizing how ND (and other movements) composes itself, separates, and possibly recomposes in new forms without completely dissolving or abandoning past struggles. Bratich argues that ND specifically lends itself to a "compositionist media studies approach to cycles of struggle."

Compositionist approaches, Bratich argues, are particularly interested in capacities of movements and are interested in assessing terms such as "grassroots, do-it-yourself, bottom-up, peer-to-peer, or alternative media to understand immanent processes of media subjectivation." His approach is interested less in "mobilizing and 'public-facing' features of social movement media and more in their work of binding, associating and strengthening relationships, reproducing collectives."

Bratich's contribution in particular raises questions for theories of social movement and protest cycles or stages (though he does not explicitly engage with those theories). Blumer's classic "four stage model" has received criticisms and revisions, but these still struggle with theorizing the temporality and chronology of various movements, which increasingly show patterns of imitation (in tactics, knowledge, and themes). Some have suggested that movements decline or die because of state or police repression, whereas others have suggested they may go into a state of abeyance. Still others, such as Davenport (2015), theorize that movements decline because of failure to sustain participation, sometimes caused by infighting, factionalization, and failure to successfully reappraise what they are doing and how it is going. Bratich presses upon the point of sustaining but also of supposed abeyance.

One might extend Bratich's insights and ask, What activist time is hidden from researchers, and how do they construct a kind of research temporality dependent on frames (when direct access becomes less possible)? Interestingly, Bratich argues that movements that have longer term goals may go through periods not just of unrest but also of rest. The ideas of rest, restlessness, restfulness, and unrest may hold richer possibilities for understanding the active culture within movements, which sustains (or fails to sustain) collective identity and goals, however loose and open-ended they may be. For example, if one interviews some former participants of ND, they may tell a tale of disappointment and of clear termination, whereas in my own participant observation of postoccupation ND meetings (with no more than 10 former participants), reappraisal and planning for future interventions were quite alive. This would indicate a kind of liminal temporality and stage between rest and publicly perceptible unrest or restlessness (though, importantly, such leadership and planning perhaps fits more of a Gramscian rather than an autonomist vision of recomposition that Bratich proposes). Bratich's theorizing points to the problems of access to objects that would reveal movement chronologies, from stirring up, feeling the clamp down, going underground, to moving on up.

Although legacy media have indeed often been unfriendly to dissent, social media have been no picnic, either. It cuts both ways. Both Russell and Feigenbaum and McCurdy emphasize the savviness, creativity, and counter-production of everyday journalism and politics. At the same time, we must acknowledge that ND fell prey to increasingly common counter-protest tactics, which achieve rather time-honored ends of reframing (demobilizing potential supporters). In other words, in a time when legacy media's influence is often said to be waning, it may have been social media more than legacy media that worked against the movement's image and ability to appeal to new participants.

Indeed, we have to consider the ways that opponents may use some of the very same means of communication and potential to troll, reframe, and sabotage a movement. Take, for example, the spectacle of neoreactionary celebrity Alain Finkielkraut, who infiltrated ND to point out its alleged hypocrisy, its non-pluralistic and supposedly fascistic underbelly. His intervention and subsequent chasing

out of La Place was filmed by amateurs and then distributed widely on social media, resulting in debates that drew attention and energy away from ND's prefigurative democratic experiments and public enthusiasm for them. For some French citizens far from La Place experiencing the protests and experiments at several mediated removes, ND was seen as violent and hypocritical, having a faintly foul *odeur* of other historic left movements claiming the mantle of liberty, fraternity, and equality before revealing a bloodthirst befitting of mob passions.

Somewhat paradoxically, Finkielkraut's provocative trolling allowed him to amplify and further broadcast his vilifying of ND frames as "fascist" and "totalitarian." As is frequently the case in the hurly-burly epistemology of the legacy and social media collider, what actually happened became a debate itself. Were ND participants violent and fascistic? Or was it Finkielkraut who was violently provocative and fascistic (not really wanting to be heard but to provoke them into having their own free speech officially stamped out by police)? Who called whom what? The cloud of post-truth politics (Harsin, 2018) quickly descends upon the hopes of activists determined to show that another world is possible. Acknowledging this arguably successful trolling is not, of course, to dismiss the creative uses or hacking of communication technology to circulate information and influence, organize and critique, and practice what you preach. But it shows how such technology and communication is a space of struggle, with little partisan favorability, and any serious overview of ND would be remiss not to note this struggle. It is perhaps this combat that scholars of communication and collective action must focus on more.

Clearly, ND was many things, and it resists easy categorization as an organized or prefigurative social movement, collective action, or form of protest. It was all of these things, not at once and not in the same place. Similarly, one might say it was launched through an organization of anger into protest, which partly remained and inspired renewed nightly meetings but which also partly morphed into different emotional registers that sustained prefigurative politics, including joy and, at times, fear, such as those when suffering police violence or aggressive men. How else to describe the flash concert and dance debouts; internal security and feminist debout? The courage and persistence to perform a different kind of democracy, in body language, listening, or hacking, reframing and broadcasting?

Scorecards, Autopsies, and Reincarnations

As Cervera-Marzal (2016a) argues with regard to 15M, spectator-supporters dispersed across a national terrain watched passionately on TV. Bratich's earlier work, discussing Foucault, emphasized the importance of supportive spectators in Occupy but also in contestatory movements in general. Foucault notes that Kant's interest in the French Revolution stemmed from how a revolutionary movement "becomes spectacle, how it is received by spectators who do not participate in it but who watch it, who attend the show and, for better or worse, let themselves be dragged along by it" (cited in Bratich, 2014, p. 72, n. 13). The line between participants and spectators is of course blurred today because even "the sharing of messages and memes already draws spectators into participating via circulation" (Bratich, 2014, p. 66). Even so, some social movement scholars will remind us that traditional news and political frames may contribute to a negative framing of the movement and events, which may then be transformed into public opinion and a contagious dampening of enthusiasm for the group (the deboutistes may become transformed from heroic, peaceful, and radical democrats, victimized by police violence and

the repressive state, into perpetrators of random, purposeless violence, harming innocent fellow citizens who otherwise might be supporters).

At this writing, "Nuit Debout!" has become a French rallying cry for left actions, one of the most recent being for slaughterhouse protests ("Des 'nuits debout,'" 2017). The fact that, as I write, a Cannes-nominated documentary on ND is touring French cinemas, accompanied by roundtables and debates (*L'Assemblée* is available on Amazon as of April 2018), also complicates ND's lifespan. It remains *debout* on Twitter, Wikipedia's ear hears its heartbeat, and others report it is on the move, disappearing and reforming, restlessly standing up again and again, sometimes resting, necessarily sleeping, but never just standing around.

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