

# **THE *NEW-NEW* SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: IS SOCIAL MEDIA CHANGING THE ONTOLOGY OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS?<sup>1</sup>**

Bart Cammaerts<sup>2</sup>

## **ABSTRACT**

Our hypermediated societies affect the very nature of what a social movement is. This article identifies five core nodal points of what constitutes a social movement: Program claims, Identity construction, Connections, Actions, and Resolve (PICAR). Primarily using France's yellow vest movement case, I assess the impact of social media on these nodal points. I find that social media afford opportunities as well as present challenges for contemporary movements which taken together amounts to a newly emerging ontology. This new-new social movement ontology is characterized by processes of discontinuity (open ideological positioning, fluid collective identities, weak ties, an online repertoire of action, and relative ephemerality) co-existing with continuity (the return of a class politics of redistribution, the continued importance of collective identity, offline repertoires, and cycles of protest). This analysis demonstrates the dynamic interplay between political and mediation opportunity structures, producing new emancipatory potentials and challenging constraints.

**Keywords:** Ontology, Social Media, Mediation Opportunity Structure, Yellow Vest Movement

---

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Anastasia Kavada, Robin Mansell, Jean-Christophe Plantin, Alison Powell, as well as the anonymous reviewers for their valuable suggestions and feedback.

<sup>2</sup> Bart Cammaerts is Professor of Politics and Communication at the Department of Media and Communications of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). He can be reached on: [b.cammaerts@lse.ac.uk](mailto:b.cammaerts@lse.ac.uk)

## INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2018, fuel tax rises, increasing rural/urban divides as well as the austerity policies of the Macron government, gave rise to a new grassroots counter-movement in France. As is prevalent with many protest movements today, the Gilets Jaunes [Yellow Vest] movement emerged online first (Bornstein, 2019). Protesters creatively turned the yellow vests which everyone is required to have in their car in France, into a high-visibility protest symbol, leading one commentator to call the yellow vest ‘one of the most effective protest garments in history’ (Friedman, 2018). The movement managed to become very prominent in a very short time span, generating a high degree of media resonance through the creation of disruptive protest spectacles. Eventually the movement waned; the protests on the first year ‘anniversary’ of the movement failed to attract large numbers and were marred by violent confrontations between protesters and police forces (Le Devin and Delouche, 2019).

While this article is not about the Yellow Vest movement *per se*, this movement will feature as a red thread throughout. Other examples will be referred to as well, but the Yellow Vest movement is deemed particularly productive here as it emerged online, making full use of the hyper-mediated and datafied context we live in today. It is also an ideologically ambiguous movement befitting of the current conjuncture and it combines, as many other contemporary movements do, both connective and collective action repertoires (Bennett and Segerberg, 2013).

This case study, as well as the other examples, serve first and foremost to reflect on the extent to which the emancipatory affordances, as well as structural limitations, of social media platforms are affecting the very ontology of what a social movement is today. Put differently, at various times in history, shifts at the societal, socio-economic and technological level have given rise to a new ontology of social movements, think of how the modernist industrial society gave rise to what we now call today traditional social movements, such as unions, characterized by demands for the redistribution of wealth or how the new social movement ontology was the product of the post-industrial society and led to more post-material demands of recognition (Tilly, 2004; Touraine, 1984). As such, the question we are faced with today is whether the information, communication and datafied societies we inhabit today, and the resulting mediation opportunity structure (Cammaerts, 2012), produces a new social movement ontology and if so, what are the continuities and the discontinuities compared to previous ontologies? This requires us to first establish what the core discursive nodal points are of the social movement ontology.

## PICAR: THE DISCURSIVE NODAL-POINTS OF THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT ONTOLOGY

A social movement is a very specific political phenomenon which is circumscribed in political science by a set of clearly articulated characteristics in order to delimit it from other socio-political phenomena such as a political party, a transnational advocacy network, a lobby group or a riot. An excellent starting point to deconstruct the social movement ontology is the work of Charles Tilly (2004). On the basis of a detailed historical analysis, he identified three core-characteristics inherent to social movements:

1. the setting up of a *campaign*, or a sustained effort to make a set of collective claims.
2. a combination of *actions*, or an ensemble of performances amounting to a repertoire of contentious action.
3. the display by movement actors of *WUNC*, which stands for Worthiness, Unity, Numbers and Commitment.

When it comes to the first characteristic, namely claim-making, movements articulate and assert a variety of claims (ibid: 12). While program claims relate to support for a cause or opposition against those the movement targets, identity claims assert a 'we'. Standing claims, finally, aim to build connections or equivalences between the movement and a variety of other political actors.

A second characteristic concerns the presence of a repertoire of contentious action which could be approached as a protest toolbox out of which activists choose a set of actions. This is not fixed either, but varies and changes *over time* – as different types of actions are imagined, and *in space* – as certain types of actions which are possible to organize in one locality might not be in another. The State is a crucial actor in this regard as it sets limits concerning what kinds of contentious actions are accommodated and which ones will be repressed, by which means. At the same time, repression and the abject rejection of movement demands by political elites and by state apparatuses can also lead to an increase in public support for the movement and an escalation in the action repertoire and/or the program claims. In conjunction with these temporal and spatial dimensions, we can also observe historical shifts in the repertoire and in the focus of contention. With the emergence of mass demonstrations and general strikes, Tilly (1986) identified a shift from a Feudal or parochial repertoire to a Modernist repertoire and from a local focus in contentious actions to a national one.

WUNC-displays, finally, represent the intersection between the performative and the symbolic aspects of contentious action. Protest performances tend to express the worthiness of the cause, as well as highlight the unity of the movement *vis-à-vis* what it contests. WUNC displays are also geared towards mobilizing the spectacle of numbers and testifying to the resolve and long-term commitment of the movement to reach its goals.

Sydney Tarrow (1994 [2011]: 9) defines social movements as ‘collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities’. Tarrow thus highlights similar characteristics as Tilly did, but foregrounded the importance of the relational dimension more, stressing the need to consider the nature of the relationship between the movement and the *powers that be*. Solidarity furthermore invokes interconnectedness and a sense of belonging, entrenched through deep-seated sentiments of injustice and moral indignation, all of which are instrumental to build alliances, recruit supporters and mobilize for actions. Moreover, by invoking an interactionist approach, Tarrow (ibid, 12) argues that the dynamic relationships between the movement and the political structures outside the movement which they aim to affect and change matters greatly. The degree to which this context is favourable or not towards a social movement and its demands is commonly denoted as the *political opportunity structure* (Koopmans, 1999). This political opportunity structure not only influences the interactions the movement has with the formal political process, but it also affects the repertoire of contentious action available to activists.

Mario Diani (1992) emphasized the relational dimension of a social movement too, but he foregrounds the internal relationships between various actors within the movement. Movements, he argued, are made up of a highly diverse set of actors and dense informal networks and within these networks Bourdieusian activist capital can be accumulated. This also implies that a social movement is not necessarily one organisation led by a charismatic leader or embodied by one organisation, but rather it is constituted by a complex network of organisations, groups and individuals.

In *What is a Social Movement?*, Hank Johnston (2014: 5) engages with a whole range of different social movement approaches and theories, which leads him to persuasively define a social movement as

those interlinked groups and organizations that carry and expound ideational-interpretative elements such as identities, ideologies, and frames, that are reflected and manifested in collective performances that we recognize as part of the modern social movement repertoire.

This definition takes Tilly’s triad (ideas, actors and events) as a starting point, and it also stresses the importance of the relational, but Johnston crucially introduces ideology and cultural framing – and thus also power – as additional insights to comprehend contentious politics and the role that social movements play in processes of social change (see also Benford and Snow, 2000). The oft undervalued role of the ideational and of the cultural aspects of a social struggle and collective action was also lamented by Alberto Melucci (1996), who stressed how this is also intrinsically tied to the dynamic construction of a collective identity. Furthermore, and crucial for the arguments developed here, Melucci explicitly referred to the importance of communication and discourse in this regard, pointing out that 'collective action, by the

sheer fact of its existence represents in its very form and models of organization a message broadcast to the rest of society' (ibid: 63).

More recently, we can also discern an emotional and affective turn within social movement studies (Goodwin and Jasper, 2004; Gould, 2010; Jasper, 1997). Countering an over-emphasis on resources and rationality within social movement theory, these scholars point towards the constitutive role that emotions and affects play in constructing a robust collective identity, mobilizing for action and achieving resonance. By producing a variety of collective emotional experiences, movements create a sense of togetherness and belonging, but emotions and passions are also central in the rejection and moral condemnation of ideological enemies and adversaries (cf. Mouffe, 2005).

A final point to make here is that underlying some of the differences in emphasis prevalent in social movement theory are often unspoken paradigmatic struggles and tensions between broadly speaking a modernist/structuralist disposition and a post-modern/post-structuralist one which emphasizes agency more. This is important to acknowledge, as this has consequences in terms of how the relationship between structure and agency is theorized (more deterministic versus contingent), how collective identities are construed (more interest-based versus emotionally-driven), and how power is conceived (more top-down versus diffused).

On the basis of this brief – and thus unavoidably non-exhaustive – overview, five core discursive nodal-points can be identified fixing the meaning of what a social movement is and constitutes:

**PICAR:**

1. **Program:** the articulation of a problem that needs fixing and a set of demands for change and moral claims, which implies a *discursive* dimension.
2. **Identity:** the construction of a shared collective identity in juxtaposition to an easily identifiable ideological enemy, which has an *emotional* dimension.
3. **Connections:** the building of a dense informal network of different actors, creating internal cohesion and interacting with media and political opponents, which represents a *relational* dimension.
4. **Actions:** the organisation of a series of public contentious actions and protest performances, which express unity and invoke emotions and constitute an *agentic* dimension.
5. **Resolve:** the determination and stamina of a sustained commitment to a common cause, which implies a long-term *historical* dimension.

The question here is two-fold: 1) how are the PICAR-nodes impacted by the current conjuncture characterized by the relentless expansion of the communicative capacities of elites, activists and citizens alike?; 2) Is the nature of that impact affecting the very ontology of what constitutes a social movement today? In the section that follows, each of the PICAR nodal-points will be unpacked further and related to contemporary

challenges and shifts at the level of the mediation opportunity structure in relation to social media.

## **P: SHIFTS AT THE LEVEL OF PROGRAM CLAIM-MAKING**

Claim-making is an essential aspect of social and political struggles and inevitably implicates a strong discursive dimension. Contesting something and making demands for change are social movements' *raison d'être*. By framing their struggle, movements identify a problem that needs fixing and propose answers to Lenin's famous question: 'What is to be done?'. Collective grievances and frustrations, as well as perceived injustices lead to the articulation of a set of demands which of course change and shift over time as societies change, as new cleavages emerge, as new tensions build and as new societal problems present themselves (Kriesi, Grande, Dolezal, Helbling, Höglinger, Hutter and Wüest, 2012).

Whereas claim-making by social movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> and first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was dominated by a struggle for representation and linked to that a politics of redistribution, in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century movement claims associated to a politics of identity and recognition asserted themselves more forcefully. Not that concerns regarding redistribution totally disappeared (cf. Fraser, 2000; Honneth, 2001), but a politics of recognition and identity, disconnected from demands for the redistribution of wealth and class struggles, befitted the emerging neoliberal order much better. A telling example of this is how LGBT Pride parades in many countries became captured by commercial interests and were turned into commercially sponsored city-branding events, prompting accusations of 'pinkwashing' (Peterson, Wahlström and Wennerhag, 2018).

In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis and the ensuing austerity politics, the political opportunity structure arguably became favourable again for a renewed politics of redistribution and class politics. We could refer in this regard to the Indignados and Occupy movements as important expressions of this (Cammaerts, 2018; della Porta, 2015; Flesher-Fominaya and Cox, 2013), but also to the abovementioned Yellow Vest movement, which certainly in France shares many of the frustrations and demands of the Occupy movement (cf. Traverso, 2019). It has, however, also become apparent that neoliberalism – the *épistémé* of our times – is proving rather difficult to contest, let alone unsettle. Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) explain how the 'new spirit of capitalism' is very apt at co-opting and ultimately neutralizing its critiques.

Part of this 'new spirit' is that progressive politics has to a large extent bought into the hegemonic de-ideologization agenda of neoliberalism, by increasingly considering the left-right cleavage a problematic and counter-productive juxtaposition in the context of claim-making. This rejection of ideological identification was already apparent in the third-way discourse, prevalent in center-left politics (Giddens, 1994), but it has in recent years also permeated radical leftwing politics. Just as rightwing politics, the radical left is also undergoing what could be called a *populist turn*, which is

accompanied by a Gramscian strategy of presenting its program claims as common sense and discursively obscuring an explicit ideological identification with a ‘leftwing’ meta-narrative. This can lead to what political philosopher Howard Caygill (2013: 208) has denoted as a politics of resistance ‘without end’.

He referred to Occupy, but the same could be argued in relation to the Yellow Vest movement, which combines a set of leftwing with rightwing diagnostic and prognostic frames and is made-up of activists who are supportive of quite antagonistic and contradictory political positions and agendas, and who often explicitly position themselves as ‘a-political’ (Bendali and Kabbaj, 2019; Bornstein, 2019; Kipfer, 2019). However, apolitical often seems to mask an alignment with the extreme right or with extreme right frames. In France this is more or less obscured, but in other countries the yellow vest movement openly identified with the extreme right; for example, with extreme pro-Brexit and anti-immigrant discourses in the UK or with pro-pipeline, anti-indigenous and climate change denial discourses in Canada.

Propriety social media platforms – or what Nick Couldry and Ulises Mejias (2019: 193) call ‘commercial infrastructures of connection’ – have not only become the main conduit through which movements propagate their program claims, they are also increasingly the main medium through which citizens consume news and receive information. This creates both opportunities as well as new constraints for movements. Social media play a central role for movements to self-mediate their program claims independently (Fenton, 2016; Tufekci, 2017). Some movement actors also attempt to game the algorithms which drive social media platforms to their advantage, aiming to maximize exposure and generate ‘likes’ and ‘shares’ through the production and circulation of emotive content (Gerlitz and Helmond, 2013).

However, the ability of activists to really shape social media algorithms and steer datafication logics is also rather limited (Bucher, 2017). The controlling power of social media platforms is most visible when they moderate content or ban activists from their platforms (Cammaerts, 2018; Milan, 2019), but there are also less visible ways through which deeply commodified social media platforms circumscribe activist actions, for instance by deciding who gets to see what or by ‘extract[ing] something from those who want their campaigns to be heard via those same systems’ (Couldry and Mejias, 2019: 193).

As this shows, the heavy reliance of contemporary movements on social media platforms to disseminate program claims and demands is not without issues. Social media algorithms and data processing lead to a very individualized, atomized and thus unique online experience for each individual and the emergence of what some have dubbed *The Daily Me* (Sunstein, 2007). This mass-individualization process has also given rise to the phenomenon of ‘filter bubbles’ and homophilic echo-chambers whereby the impression is created ‘that our narrow self-interest is all that exists’ (Pariser, 2011: 164). It is often argued in this regard that these filter bubbles hamper movements because they end up preaching to the converted (Rucht, 2013).

As Alex Bruns (2019) argues, however, the fears linked to filter bubbles need to be nuanced as they are more often than not part of a broader and recurring moral panic induced by the emergence of new technologies. In the context of social movements and contentious politics, it could be argued for instance that while social media spaces do reproduce similarities and that the algorithmic curating of content tends to intensify relationships between ‘likeminded’ content such that extreme, divisive or emotive content gets more traction, this can certainly also benefit some movements.

In the case of the Yellow Vest movement, the changes in the Facebook algorithm introduced after the victory of Donald Trump, led to the privileging of popular and emotive content that is shared and commented upon by friends and family to the detriment of content from organisations and official sources. This was deemed to have helped the movement, precisely because its reach on social media platforms such as Facebook went far beyond those that liked their Facebook groups, thereby breaking out of the filter-bubble (Bock, 2018; Bornstein, 2019). At the same time the reach of the movement should not be exaggerated either.

## **I: SHIFTS AT THE LEVEL OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITY**

Besides a set of program claims, which are subsequently mediated through a variety of channels, a second important pre-requisite to be able to speak of a social movement is the active construction of a collective identity, of a ‘we’, which has an inherent affective and emotional dimension. Constructing a collective identity involves an iterative and dynamic process in which a multitude of individual and collective actors participate with a view to defining the ‘ends, means and field of action’ (Melucci, 1995: 44). This construction of a ‘we’ is not a straightforward linear process; it is an often bumpy and above all conflictual and dynamic process. Collective identities change over time through processes of self-reflexivity (Cammaerts, 2015), but also as a result of the actions (or indeed non-actions) of economic and political elites. As Melucci (1995: 47) highlights,

a movement only becomes self-aware through a relation with its external environment, which offers to social action a field of opportunities and constraints that are in turn recognized and defined as such by the actor.

This ties in with a post-structuralist conception of identity, as encapsulated by Jacques Derrida’s notion of the ‘constitutive outside’ (Derrida, 1978: 39-44). From this perspective, political identities are formed through antagonisms and ‘by their common reference to something external’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 127). As a result of this, collective identities are constituted through the mobilization of moral frames, the juxtaposition of binary oppositions and the construction of strict boundaries between what is considered to be ‘just’ and ‘unjust’ or ‘fair’ and ‘unfair’ (Benford and Snow, 2000). Through these binaries and the juxtaposition between ‘the self’ and ‘the enemy’, social movements establish unity amongst difference, expand the scope of conflict and



invoke strong emotions of rejection and moral indignation towards ideological enemies, as well as feelings of internal solidarity, belonging and righteousness (Jasper, 1997: 357).

The Indignados and Occupy movements, but also the Yellow Vest movement, are prime examples of this, channeling public anger towards the capitalist system and the political and economic elites sustaining it – ‘the 1%’. However, the differences between the Indignados and Occupy on the one hand and the Yellow Vest movement on the other expose the internal divergences within ‘the 99%’. In this regard, class, race and rural/urban cleavages assert themselves again as highly relevant and divisive identity concepts; the Yellow Vest movement is distinctly more rural, as well as more working- and lower middle class than the Indignados or Occupy movement were (Kipfer, 2019); all these movements are also rather white.

Some argue, however, that the importance and relevance of stable collective identities in the context of contentious action has decreased considerably in today’s hyper-mediated context (Bennett and Segerberg, 2013; McDonald, 2002). Countering this, others assert that ‘[f]ar from having disappeared from the horizon of contemporary activism, collective identity still constitutes a pivotal question for activists and scholars alike’ (Gerbaudo and Treré, 2015: 866). The distinction between thin and thick collective identities, as outlined by Deana Rohlinger, and Leslie Bunnage (2018), might be useful in this regard and especially their contention that the construction of thick collective identities is dependent on the nature of the movement and above all its willingness to foster a political community.

Arguably, by developing a strong political community, strengthened through direct action and by state repression, the Yellow Vest movement managed to solidify an initially thin collective identity into a thick one. This was achieved by turning online enthusiasm into offline direct actions and thus connective into collective action (Schradié, 2018; Traverso, 2019). At the same time, the ideological ambiguity of those identifying with the movement, as evidenced by Zakaria Bendali and Gala Kabbaj’s (2019) survey data, points to the fragility of and tensions within the yellow vest movement’s collective identity. In this regard, distant sympathizers tend to identify much more with the extreme right and a racialized class politics than more regular participants to the actions (Kipfer, 2019). Furthermore, these tensions also led to serious internal conflicts within the movement, culminating in *Éric Drouet*, one of the founders of the movement, to publicly distance himself from the movement in January 2020 (CNews, 2020).

What the debate on the decreasing or remaining importance of collective identity above all points towards is the urgent need to rethink and re-evaluate what constitutes a collective identity today, how it manifests itself in various ways within the contemporary hyper-mediated and more individualized context and how a dialectic between online and offline interactions impacts on the process of collective identity construction and movement formation. The challenge here is that in a digital age

characterized by the fragmentation of *the political* and concomitant de-ideologization processes, complex assemblages of at times contradictory collective identities have emerged which are not tied together any longer by an encompassing intersectional meta-narrative. Movements must thus be innovative and creative in order to construct collectivity out of fragmented diversity, both in terms of interests and a variety of competing identities (Flesher Fominaya, 2010; Kavada, 2015). As a case such as the Yellow Vest movement demonstrates, this is easier said than done. Likewise, as Avigail McClelland-Cohen and Camille Endacott (2020) conclude in their study of the Anti-Trump Women's March, intersectionality was more an aspirational rather than embodied frame.

It is important in this regard to consider that mediation and the circulation of movement frames and discourses themselves are increasingly constitutive of collective identity formation processes. In other words, the online sharing, liking, commenting, supporting, condemning are 'the new building blocks of collective identity' (Milan, 2015: 896). Anastasia Kavada (2015) comes to a similar conclusion when she argues that the online context contributes to a process of 'identization'.

The algorithmic, individualized and commercial logics of social media platforms do not, however, always align with the collective logic of social movements (Coretti and Pica, 2015; Couldry and Mejias, 2019; Fenton and Barassi, 2011; Juris, 2012). While some activists buy into the techno-optimist discourse, many others are acutely aware of these contradictions and tend to consciously negotiate the inherent tensions of digital capitalism by using these platforms instrumentally to foster their aims and build political communities of interest, but also be cognizant of their limitations and issues (Barassi, 2015; Bucher, 2017; Cammaerts, 2018).

As outlined above, establishing inside/outside boundaries of a movement are also very important to enhance and strengthen its collective identity. The internet and social media platforms in particular, however, make it much more difficult to demarcate the inside and the outside of a movement, which can complicate collective identity construction (Gerbaudo and Treré, 2015). Furthermore, as outlined in the section above on program claims, we can also observe a strategy of many movements to keep the boundaries between the inside and outside of a movement deliberately vague and open. This also speaks to the heterogeneity of many social movement networks today and the complex nature of connections and relations, internal to the movement, as well as between the movement and other societal actors, which is the focus of the next section.

### **C: SHIFTS AT THE LEVEL OF CONNECTIONS**

The relational dimension is hugely important in the genesis as well as sustainment of a social movement. This is not merely relevant in terms of the connections between those active within a movement or a movement's organizational structures, but as much in the context of the various relationships (or lack thereof) between a movement and other

actors in society, be they economic and political elites, broader civil society as well as public opinion. Furthermore, algorithms and the sorting mechanisms inherent to them in themselves also fulfil a connective role; they establish connections between various actors internal and external to the movement and they enhance particular voices whilst silencing others.

When it comes to the ‘relational within’, movements are made-up of dense and rhizomatic networks of activists, groupuscules, collectives, less and more formalized organisations and sympathizers. While the continued importance of offline ties is rightly emphasized by Diani (2000), at the same time the huge impact of digital infrastructures on the mobilizing power and connective potential of social movements has arguably become more evident and pervasive in the last two decades (Bennett and Segerberg, 2013; Cammaerts, 2015; Earl and Kimport, 2011).

Building on social network theory, some have also foregrounded the relevance of respectively *weak-* and *latent ties* for collective action in a digital age and championed an approach which conceptualizes a social movement network as both a power and a communication structure (Cammaerts, 2012; González-Bailóna and Wang, 2016; Haythornthwaite, 2002). The combination of weaker ideological identification, more fragmented collective identities and a digital context more prone to foster weak rather than strong ties, has advantages for social movements in terms of their network-building capabilities, standing claims and scope-enlargement efforts. Some years ago, Zizi Papacharissi (2002) already theorised how the internet represents a space where productive new social relations can be forged and where latent ties can be turned into active ones. Furthermore, activists on the barricades, so to speak, can also feel supported and strengthened by the sympathy and affectiveness with their struggle as expressed online (Cammaerts, 2018; Tréré, 2015). In the context of the Occupy Movement, Kavada (2015: 884) concludes that:

social media users were important for supporting emotionally the core activists participating face-to-face, both through messages of solidarity and through more concrete activities, such as providing material support to the occupation.

The networked structure of social media and its propensity to mobilize the strength of weak ties and activate latent ties also lends itself well to the establishment of horizontal ‘leaderless’ movements and to what Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg (2013: 36) have denoted as connective action or ‘digitally mediated networked modes of organization’ which are bottom-up, crowd-enabled or loosely coordinated. This aligns with how the Yellow Vest Movement emerged initially, via an online petition on Change.org, which was subsequently promoted on Facebook, but also on a local radio station and the Facebook page of a local news website (Bornstein, 2019).

This new mediated relational architecture of contentious politics also presents movements with a set of challenges. Bottom-up, spontaneous, contemporary movements propelled by social media often exhibit a lack of organisational structures

which is usually necessary to sustain contestation and channel the passionate political energy that they generate towards achieving genuine change. When organisational structures do form, decision-making in them is often bottom-up, diffused and consensual, such as was the case in Occupy (Graeber, 2013), but also the Yellow Vest movement had a (local as well as national) assembly culture (Stetler, 2019). This is not without issues either; evidence from the anti-austerity movement in the UK suggests that these forms of consensual decision-making can potentially render movements slow to react and inefficient. It can also have a moderating impact, leading movements to shy away from more outspoken and radical positions or actions (Cammaerts, 2018). Furthermore, as Geert Lovink (2016: 188) points out, what good is the ritual of consensual decision-making within a movement if there are no or very weak organisational structures in place to actually execute the consensual decision?

These emerging tensions between loose and open structures of contemporary movements and their internal decision-making practices also explains why many contemporary scholars continue to emphasize the relevance of the organizational, of dense sociality, and of conflictual internal politics within contemporary movements (Fenton, 2016; Kavada, 2015; Lovink, 2016). The concept of *organized networks*, in contrast to networked organizations, is inspiring in this regard (Rossiter, 2006). Organized networks require a degree of hierarchization and regard communicative processes as an inherent part of their desired outcome, leading to new institutional forms driven by ‘intellect, passion and commitment to invention [...] a desire for social-technical change and transformation’ (ibid: 214).

The Yellow Vest movement could be approached as an organized network combining the strength of weak ties with the transformation of these weak ties into strong ones through action and collective identity construction. While it is often denoted as a ‘Facebook movement’ (Newton, 2018), the movement is not unstructured nor leaderless. End of November 2018, a delegation of eight movement ‘communicators’ emerged who became spokespersons of the movement and who also met with officials (Gilets Jaunes, 2018). It is relevant in the context of this article to point out that these ‘messengers’ were often moderators of popular Facebook groups or instigators of online petitions (Glad, 2018), providing them with activist capital. Another way of approaching this is through the lense of the ‘dictatorship of action’ (Milan, 2013), i.e. those that do and act, generate activist capital and internal power.

The other relational dimension is between the movement and broader civil society on the one hand and the formal political process on the other. Regarding civil society, movements will often engage in frame bridging and frame extension strategies, aiming to build coalitions and enlarge the scope of conflict (Benford and Snow, 2000). When it comes to political elites, the extent of support for movement aims will often depend on the precise nature of the demands (moderate versus radical, reformist versus revolutionary) and the degree of support within public opinion or amongst which segments of the population. This relationship is also dynamic over time, as political elites will often try a variety of tactics to weaken and neutralize movements, which can

go from blatant attempts to coopt the movement at the one end of the spectrum to heavy repression on the other (Johnston, 2011).

The Yellow Vest movement sought to build intersectional connections with other subaltern groups such as the *banlieuesards*, and with unions, student organisations as well as anti-racism groups, thereby also attempting to dispel the association of the movement with the extreme right (Kipfer, 2019). The relationship between the movement and the French political establishment is also complex and multi-faceted. The failed attempts at cooptation of the movement by the extreme left and extreme right were already mentioned above. The French government scrapped the fuel tax one month after the start of the protests in an attempt to appease the protesters and later it also made a series of mostly symbolic concessions. President Macron even called the demands of the movement 'fair' (BBC, 2019). However, another response of the government was one of brutal repression; one year after the movement erupted, 10.000 people had been arrested, 3.100 convicted, 400 sent to jail, 24 people lost an eye due to plastic bullets, 5 lost an arm and 2 died at the hands of police violence (Bock, 2019; France Info, 2019). This also brings the action repertoire into view.

## **A: SHIFTS AT THE LEVEL OF THE REPERTOIRE OF CONTENTIOUS ACTIONS**

Social movements enact a set of protest performances aimed at voicing and legitimating their program claims, demonstrating strength and unity and thereby stressing the agentic dimension of the social movement ontology. As already discussed above, the repertoire of contentious action at the disposal of a movement is influenced by the structural aspects of the external world (Koopmans, 1999). As a result of this, certain types of actions are more prone to occur if the political opportunity structure accommodates them.

Contentious actions are, however, not only influenced by the political opportunity structure of the possible and the impossible, but increasingly also by the mediation opportunity structure (Cammaerts, 2012). Contentious actions today are thus increasingly shaped by what is deemed to generate mainstream media resonance, and by the creativity of activists to navigate the affordances and structural constraints of the communication tools at their disposal in order to mobilize for, to organize and to self-mediate their actions. This also speaks to Stefania Milan's (2015) notion of 'cloud protesting', whereby algorithms are starting to shape collective action.

In spite of this, it has to be noted that the modernist repertoire contentious action, as identified by Tilly (1986), is still quite dominant in contemporary contentious politics. Just as was the case with the Arab Spring, the Indignados and Occupy, the Yellow Vest movement used occupation of public spaces (roundabouts) as their main tactic. This harks back to the old tactic of the barricade, amply used during the French revolution. Besides this, weekly roving, unstructured and unsanctioned protests on Saturdays were also organized in cities across France, at times linking up with other demonstrations

and agendas (Kipfer, 2019). Many activists actively livestreamed the movement's actions through social media platforms (Bornstein, 2019).

As a result of all this, the Yellow Vest movement generated high levels of social media resonance, as well as mainstream media resonance and soon enough the whole world was talking about them. Furthermore, movement spill-overs could be observed as activists in other countries started to appropriate the yellow vest as a protest symbol too. Digital culture thus not only permeates and drives the movement forward, it also generates mediated transnational movement spill-overs in terms of message, slogans, symbols, tactics and/or protest spectacles. All this has given rise to what could be denoted as a *Post-Modern Repertoire* of contentious action.

In line with a greater focus on individualism, the post-modern repertoire of contentious action is more prefigurative rather than exclusively confrontational (Mercea, 2012). It is also less top-down organized, and much more spontaneous, improvised and personalized (Bennett and Segerberg, 2013). In addition to this, central to the post-modern repertoire is a digital repertoire that is both facilitative and constitutive of direct action (Costanza-Chock, 2003; Rolfe, 2005; Van Laer and Van Aelst, 2010). Facilitative in the sense that social media platforms have become instrumental in order to distribute movement frames, to mobilize for offline actions and to self-mediate protest spectacles. Constitutive through the emergence of movements as semantic networks that coalesce and aggregate around a social media hashtag, such as #GiletsJaunes, #MeToo and #BLM, or through hacktivist and sousveillance practices whereby protesters film and expose police violence on social media platforms (Cammaerts, 2018; Ince, Rojas and Davis, 2017; Mann and Ferenbok, 2013). Because of this digital repertoire, it is argued that contemporary movements are able to achieve higher impact with low numbers and relatively low levels of commitment (George and Leidner, 2019).

Views on the importance and centrality of mediation and a digital repertoire are somewhat mixed, however, with techno-optimist accounts being countered by more critical voices. Some have argued that online engagement with social movements by citizens through social media platforms represents a form of lazy participation, as expressed through concepts such as slacktivism, clicktivism, activism lite, and five-minute or armchair activism (Earl and Kimport, 2011; Morozov, 2011).

Others adhere more to a stepping stone theory whereby weak online interactions might represent 'a first step in the ladder-of-engagement' (Karpf, 2010: 35). This view acknowledges that low-cost online engagement can, over time, lead to offline engagement (Christensen, 2011; Mercea, 2012). It also facilitates the political engagement with movements and movement discourses by people who would otherwise not be politically active at all and as mentioned above online enthusiasm also provides moral support for more active activists (Cammaerts, 2012, 2018).

Finally, as so many recent movements have shown, including Occupy and the Yellow Vest Movement, but also #MeToo and #BLM, it makes little sense in today's hyper-mediated societies to separate online repertoires from offline repertoires, they always co-exist and ideally reinforce each other. Even movements that pre-dominantly or indeed exclusively exist online, do have offline consequences and presence, if only through amplification by the mainstream media, the shifting of public perceptions and attitudes or through the use of the hashtag at offline protests.

## **R: SHIFTS AT THE LEVEL OF RESOLVE**

The final nodal point in the ontology of a social movement is resolve. To put it in Aristotelian terms: one action does not a movement make. This ties in with the overall aim of social movements to achieve social and political change, which tends to require a strong and resolute long-term commitment to a given cause and above all the resolve to sustain contention over time until victory has been reached; something the famous Cuban revolutionary slogan *¡Hasta la Victoria Siempre!* encapsulates well.

Stamina and the ongoing sustainment of political struggle and contestation might very well be one of the greatest challenges for contemporary social movements. Lovink (2016: 198) observes in this regard that '[c]urrent movements scale up very fast (in part because of the use of social media during the days of mobilization), yet, as street crowds, they disintegrate just as quickly'. As argued above, sustaining contention is also compounded by relatively weak organizational structures, a lack of charismatic leaders and strong ties.

Besides this, there is a real danger that online enthusiasm for a cause or an action – when measured through likes, shares, expressions of support, etc. – might give activists a false sense of success, whereas in reality economic and political elites remain unfazed and unforced to implement fundamental changes. As Wyn Grant (2005: 372) quite rightly observed some years ago,

[i]n a media-dominated age, there is a risk that organisations may consider that getting their issue on the political agenda is enough whereas in fact it is only the start of the battle.

Part of the responsibility for these low levels of resolve also lies with citizens and the broader demos. In managing information and communication abundance, our attention spans have arguably become shorter, which is in part fed by the way social media platforms operate (Paasonen, 2016). The question short attention spans raise for movements is how to sustain the initial emotive enthusiasm of a hashtag, an online or indeed an offline mobilization towards a more long-term project of social and political change. As Veronica Barassi (2015: 113) points out in the context of her research on digital activism, 'one fundamental problem of insurgent networks is precisely their temporality'. Returning to the Yellow Vest movement, eventually internal conflicts, heavy repression by the state and certainly the recent COVID-19 epidemic made many

protesters put their yellow vest back in the glove compartment. This does, however, not mean that the anger, grievances and activist energy which gave rise to the Yellow Vest movement has dissipated too.

Some scholars also argue that this transience and the continual appearing, submerging and resurfacing of movements and of contestation is not necessarily a problem. Building on research in the non-democratic context of Iran, Emad Khazraee and Alison Novak (2018: 11), for example, state that ‘while collective identities on social media may not be permanently visible, they have the potential to reemerge very quickly when conditions require or permit’, which could also be observed recently with the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement and the Black Lives Matter movement. Movements are not always hyper-active, but tend to alternate between periods of intense activity and periods of retreat, self-reflexivity and transformation. During such periods of *abeyance*, ‘pockets of movement activity may continue to exist and can serve as starting points of a new cycle of the same or a new movement at a later point in time’ (Taylor and Crossley, 2013: 1). It seems, however, that indignation and dramatic events, such as the police murder of George Floyd for example, are essential today to kick-start new cycles of contention.

The larger question here is also whether resolve matters as much as it did decades ago? Maybe, occasional short bursts of passionate contentious energy are much more prone to lead to profound change in attitudes, norms and views compared to the past, precisely because of the fast pace that hyper-mediation and the global mediascape induces.

### **A ‘NEW-NEW’ SOCIAL MOVEMENT ONTOLOGY?**

Almost a decade ago, Manuel Castells (2012: 15) argued that the ‘internet age’ led to the emergence of ‘a new species of social movement’ all together. As discussed above, this new species seems to be less top-down and hierarchical, more participatory and decentralized, deeply mediated, accommodating both online and offline repertoires, combining connective with collective action, are easily transnationally scalable, and bundle weak and strong identities, as well as pre-existing and newly formed ties and connections. The Yellow Vest movement, but also other recent movements, are good examples of such *new-new* social movements.

The question at hand, however, is to which extent these new ‘species’ of movements, making full use of the potentialities offered by digital technologies and mitigating the constraints, are also expressions of a new social movement ontology? In a way, it could of course be argued that the social movement ontology has never been fixed and stable. It is an inherently moving target, permanently morphing with a view to agilely adapt to changing societies, to changing societal cleavages and conflicts, to the dynamic nature of the political opportunity structure and also to the changing mediation opportunity structure as it presents itself to movements overall and in specific contexts.



Having said that, it would be reasonable to accept that just as the post-1968 ‘new’ social movement ontology was a product of the post-industrial society (Touraine, 1981), the emergence of a *new-new* social movement ontology is aligned to contemporary hyper-mediated and datafied societies. Based on the argument developed above, this new ontology could be denoted as ideologically open-ended at best, confused and ambiguous at worse in terms of program claims, but also bringing issues of class, identity and race as well as a politics of redistribution back onto the political agenda. It relies on including a wide variety of fluid and disparate – thin as well as strong – identities, which at times is framed in intersectional terms, at other times in more contradictory and exclusionary terms. This is symptomatic of the current inter-regnum; a time when the old (i.e. neo-liberalism) is dying but the new has not been born yet, and when ‘a great variety of morbid symptoms appear’ (Gramsci, 1971: 276).

The new ontology is furthermore often characterised by relatively weak organizational structures and a lack of top-down charismatic leaders. Instead, we see more bottom-up, spontaneous, organic mobilizations emerging, made possible by the mobilizing and communicative affordances of social media. At the same time, the idea of the leaderless movement is also a fallacy as over time leaders tend to emerge through action and the accumulation of activist capital.

An online repertoire of contentious action has developed and plays a more and more pivotal role, but crucially this online repertoire tends to operate in close interaction with an offline repertoire, especially when it come to the organisation, mobilization and self-mediation of protest spectacles and (disruptive) dissent events. This oscillation between connective and collective action makes so-called WUNC displays less crucial, as the online context offers clever workarounds and allows movements to punch above their weight.

Another feature of the new ontology is a more pronounced transnational dimension expressed through a higher propensity for movement spill-overs across national borders. Such spill-overs can also be partial, for instance by selectively appropriating a protest artefact or protest tactic, but not all the related program claims, frames and demands.

Finally, the resolve and stamina of many contemporary movements is passionate and committed, but more often shortlived. As such, it is deemed that contemporary movements are more ephemeral and more prone to peter out relatively quickly. However, it is important to note that the fluctuation between moments of high activity and low activity within mobilizations and movements is not an entirely new phenomenon, as illustrated by Tarrow’s (1994[2011]) notion of ‘cycles of contention’.

## CONCLUSION

Claims of new-ness thus always need to be approached with great care and with the explicit acknowledgement that processes of discontinuity and disruption invariably go hand in hand with processes of profound continuity and realignment. It is thus not because an online repertoire has emerged that therefore the offline ‘Modernist’ repertoire of protest and disruption has disappeared or has become less relevant, on the contrary even, one tends to reinforce the other and vice versa.

As the case of the Yellow Vest movement, but also other examples of contemporary movements, highlight, processes of discontinuity and continuity, innovative activist practices and traditional activist routines co-exist. They also expose the dynamic interplay between the political and the mediation opportunity structures, producing new emancipatory potentials, but equally so, presenting a set of new constraints.

At an epistemological level, it seems that this new ontology also exposes the need to make the tensions between a structuralist and post-structuralist disposition more visible when approaching social movements as a political phenomenon and theorising their relationship to processes of social transformation and political change. These competing epistemological positions are rarely made explicit in social movement theory; they are rather implicitly present, for instance when it comes to articulating the role of discourse, ideology, and identity construction, when addressing the relevance of rationality versus emotions/affect, material versus cultural dimensions of contention, or how power and resistance is theorised. In this regard, it has become clear over the years that acknowledging the central role of discourse, culture, and emotions as well as the dialectic, dynamic and complex relationship between structure and agency is crucial to understanding contemporary movements, their strategies of social change and how mediation is quintessential to achieve change.

Finally, we should not uncritically embrace the technological deterministic claim that changes in the ontology of social movements are primarily driven and determined by the internet and social media. As the very notion of mediation aims to explain, media and communication technologies operate in conjunction with various other societal forces and realms, be they economic, social, cultural or political. It influences these, for sure, but they are also shaped by these very forces. As Roger Silverstone (2005: 203) pointed out in relation to mediation theory: ‘the media have to be explained as social just as they are required to be a part of the explanation of the social’. From this follows, that while mediation and social media play an increasingly central role in contentious politics, it should always be situated within and related to other realms of influence and power if we want to understand its role in processes of social and political change.

## REFERENCES:

- Barassi, Veronica. 2015. *Activism on the Web: Everyday Struggles Against Digital Capitalism*, London: Routledge.
- BBC. 2019. France's Macron responds to yellow vests with promise of reforms. 25 April: <http://tiny.cc/8zzvtz>
- Bendali, Zakaria and Kabbaj, Gala. 2019. *Ideological Divisions in the 'Yellow Vest' Movement*. Brussels: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung.
- Benford, Robert D. and Snow, David A. 2000. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26: 611-39.
- Bennett, Lance W. and Segerberg, Alexandra. 2013. *The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bock, Pauline. 2018. "How Facebook fuelled France's violent gilet jaunes protests." *Wired*, 6 December: <http://tiny.cc/4igrez>, last accessed 17 April 2021
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2019. "Emmanuel Macron's Year of Cracking Heads." *Foreign Policy*, 29 November: <http://tiny.cc/9zzvtz>, last accessed 17 April 2021
- Boltanski, Luc and Chiappello, Ève. 2005. *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Verso.
- Bornstein, Roman. 2019. "En Immersion Numérique avec les « Gilets Jaunes »." Fondation Jean Jaurès, 14 January.
- Bruns, Axel. 2019. *Are Filter Bubbles Real?*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bucher, Tania. 2017. "The algorithmic imaginary: Exploring the ordinary affects of Facebook algorithms." *Information, Communication & Society* 20(1): 30-44.
- Cammaerts, Bart. 2012. "Protest Logics and the Mediation Opportunity Structure." *European Journal of Communication* 27(2): 117-34.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2015. "Technologies of Self-Mediation: Affordances and Constraints of Social Media for Protest Movements." Pp. 97-110 in *Civic Engagement and Social Media: Political Participation Beyond the Protest*, edited by Julie Uldam and Anne Vestergaard. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2018. *The Circulation of Anti-Austerity Protest*. Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan.
- Castells, Manuel. 2012. *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Caygill, Howard. 2013. *On Resistance: A Philosophy of Defiance*. London: Bloomsbury Press.
- Christensen, Henrik Serup. 2011. "Political activities on the Internet: Slacktivism or political participation by other means?." *First Monday* 16(2): <http://tiny.cc/okgrez>, last accessed 17 April 2021

- CNews (2020) "Eric Drouet abandonne les Gilets Jaunes." 26 January: <http://tiny.cc/a1rjsz>, last accessed 17 April 2021
- Coretti, Lorenzo and Pica, Daniele (2015) "The rise and fall of collective identity in networked movements: communication protocols, Facebook, and the anti-Berlusconi protest." *Information, Communication & Society* 18(8): 951-67.
- Costanza-Chock, Sasha (2003). "Mapping the Repertoire of Electronic Contention." Pp. 173-91 in *Representing Resistance: Media, Civil disobedience, and the global justice movement*, edited by Andy Opel and Donnalyn Pompper. London: Praeger.
- Couldry, Nick and Mejias, Ulises A. 2019. *The Costs of Connection: How Data Is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- della Porta, Donnatella. 2015. *Social Movements in Times of Austerity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1978. *Writing and Difference*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Diani, Mario. 1992. "The Concept of Social Movement." *Sociological Review* 40(1): 1-25.
- Earl, Jennifer and Kimport, Katrina. 2011. *Digitally Enabled Social Change: Activism in the Internet Age*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Fenton, Natalie. 2016. *Digital. Political. Radical*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Fenton, Natalie and Barassi, Veronica. 2011. "Alternative Media and Social Networking Sites." *The Communication Review* 14(3): 179-96.
- Flesher-Fominaya, Cristina. 2010. "Creating Cohesion from Diversity: The Challenge of Collective Identity Formation in the Global Justice Movement." *Sociological Inquiry* 80(3): 377-404.
- Flesher-Fominaya, Cristina and Cox, Laurence, eds. 2013. *Understanding European Movements: New social movements, global justice struggles, anti-austerity*. London: Routledge.
- France Info (2019) "Policiers renvoyés en correctionnelle." 8 November: <http://tiny.cc/azzvtz>, last accessed 17 April 2021
- Fraser, Nancy. 2000. "Rethinking Recognition." *New Left Review* 3(May): 107-20.
- Friedman, Vanessa. 2018. "The Power of the Yellow Vest." *The New York Times*, 4 December: <http://tiny.cc/flrjsz>, last accessed 17 April 2021
- George, Jordana J., & Leidner, Dorothy E. 2019. "From Clicktivism to Hacktivism: Understanding digital activism." *Information and Organization* 29(3): 1-45.
- Gerbaudo, Paolo and Treré, Emiliano. 2015. "In search of the 'we' of social media activism: introduction to the special issue on social media and protest identities." *Information, Communication & Society* 18(8): 865-71.
- Gerlitz, Carolin and Helmond, Anne. 2013. "The like economy: Social buttons and the data-intensive web." *New Media & Society* 15(8): 1348-65.

- Giddens, Anthony. 1994. *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gilets Jaunes. 2018. “Créations d’une délégation de communicants et rencontre avec le Président de la République, le Premier Ministre et son Gouvernement.” Communiqué Officiel, 26 November.
- Glad, Vincent. 2018. “Dans le combat final des gilets jaunes, Jupiter va affronter des modérateurs Facebook.” *Liberations*, 30 November: <http://tiny.cc/gngrez>, last accessed 17 April 2021
- González-Bailóna, Sandra and Wang, Ning. 2016. “Networked discontent: The anatomy of protest campaigns in social media.” *Social Networks* 44(1): 95-104.
- Goodwin, Jeff and Jasper, James M., eds. 2004. *Rethinking Social Movements: Structure, Meaning, and Emotion*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Gould, Deborah. 2010. “On Affect and Protest.” Pp. 18-44 in *Political Emotions*, edited by Janet Staiger, Ann Cvetkovich, and Ann Reynolds. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd.
- Graeber, David. 2013. *The Democracy Project: A History, a Crisis, a Movement*. New York, NY: Spiegel & Grau.
- Grant, Wyn. 2005. “Pressure Politics: A politics of collective consumption?.” *Parliamentary Affairs* 58(2): 366-79.
- Haythornthwaite, Caroline. 2002. “Strong, Weak, and Latent Ties and the Impact of New Media.” *The Information Society* 18(5): 385-401.
- Honneth, Axel. 2001. “Recognition or Redistribution? Changing perspectives on the Moral Order of Society.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 18(2-3): 43-55.
- Ince, Jelani, Rojas, Fabio, and Davis, Clayton A. 2017. “The social media response to Black Lives Matter: How Twitter users interact with Black Lives Matter through hashtag use.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40(11): 1814-30.
- Jasper, James M. 1997. *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography, and Creativity in Social Movements*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- Johnston, Hank. 2011. *States and Social Movements*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2014. *What is a Social Movement?*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Juris, Jeff. 2012. “Reflections on #Occupy everywhere: Social media, public space and emerging logics of aggregation.” *American Ethnologist* 39(2): 259-79.
- Karpf, David. 2010. “Online Political Mobilization from the Advocacy Group’s Perspective: Looking Beyond Clicktivism.” *Policy & Internet* 2(4): 7-41.
- Kavada, Anastasia. 2015. “Creating the collective: social media, the Occupy Movement and its constitution as a collective actor.” *Information, Communication & Society* 18(8): 872-86.
- Kipfer, Stefan. 2019. “What colour is your vest? Reflections on the yellow vest movement in France.” *Studies in Political Economy* 100(3): 209-31.

- Khazraee, Emad and Novak, Alison N. 2018. "Digitally Mediated Protest: Social Media Affordances for Collective Identity Construction." *Social Media + Society* 4(1): 1814-30.
- Koopmans, Ruud. 1999. "Political. Opportunity. Structure. Some Splitting to Balance the Lumping." *Sociological Forum* 14(1): 93-105.
- Kriesi, Hanspeter, Grande, Edgar, Dolezal, Martin, Helbling, Marc, Höglinger, Dominic, Hutter, Swen and Wüest, Bruno, eds. 2012. *Political Conflict in Western Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Laclau, Ernesto and Mouffe, Chantal. 1985. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso.
- Le Devin, Willy and Delouche, Charles. 2019. "A Paris, l'anniversaire des gilets jaunes marqué par des violences." *Libération*, 16 novembre 2019: <http://tiny.cc/h1rjsz>
- Lovink, Geert. 2016. *Social Media Abyss: Critical Internet Cultures and the Force of Negation*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Mann, Steve and Ferenbok, Joseph. 2013. "New Media and the Power Politics of Sousveillance in a Surveillance-Dominated World." *Surveillance & Society* 11(1/2): 18-34.
- Martín-Barbero, Jesús. 1993. *Communication, Culture and Hegemony: From the Media to Mediations*. London: Sage.
- McClelland-Cohen, Avigail and Endacott, Camille. 2020. "The Signs of Our Discontent: Framing Collective Identity at the Women's March on Washington." *Communication Studies* 71(5): 842-56.
- McDonald, Kevin. 2002. "From Solidarity to Fluidarity: social movements beyond 'collective identity': the case of globalization conflicts." *Social Movement Studies* 1(2): 109-28.
- Melucci, Alberto. 1995. "The Process of Collective Identity." Pp. 41-63 in *Social Movements and Culture*, edited by Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1996. *Challenging Codes: Collective action in the information age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mercea, Dan. 2012. "Digital prefigurative participation: The entwining of online communication and offline participation in protest events." *New Media & Society* 14(1): 153-69.
- Milan, Stefania. 2013. *Social Movements and Their Technologies: Wiring Social Change*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2015. "From social movements to cloud protesting: the evolution of collective identity." *Information, Communication & Society* 18(8): 887-900.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2019. "The materiality of clouds. Beyond a platform-specific critique of contemporary activism." Pp. 116-27 in *Social Media Materialities and Protest: Critical Reflections*, edited by Mette Mortesen, Christina Neumayer, and Thomas Poell. New York: Routledge.

- Morozov, Evgeny. 2011. *The Net Delusion: How Not to Liberate the World*. London: Penguin Books.
- Mouffe, Chantal. 2005. *On the Political*. London: Routledge.
- Newton, Casey. 2018. "How Facebook Groups sparked a crisis in France." *The Verge*, 4 December: <http://tiny.cc/qggregz>, last accessed 17 April 2021
- Papacharissi, Zizi. 2002. "The virtual sphere: The internet as a public sphere." *New Media & Society* 4(1): 9-27.
- Pariser, Eli. 2011. *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You*. London: Penguin Books.
- Paasonen, Susanna. 2016. "Fickle Focus: Distraction, affect and the production of value in social media." *First Monday*, 6 September: <http://tiny.cc/q1rjsz>, last accessed 17 April 2021
- Peterson, Abby, Wahlström, Mattias and Wennerhag, Magnus. 2018. *Pride Parades and LGBT Movements: Political Participation in an International Comparative Perspective*. London: Routledge.
- Rohlinger, Deana A. and Bunnage, Leslie A. 2018. "Collective Identity in The Digital Age: Thin and Thick Identities in Moveon.Org and the Tea Party Movement." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 23(2): 135-57.
- Rolfe, Brett. 2005. "Building an Electronic Repertoire of Contention." *Social Movement Studies* 4(1): 65-74.
- Rossiter, Ned. 2006. *Organized Networks: Media Theory, Creative Labour, New Institutions*. Rotterdam: NAi Publishers.
- Schradie, Jen. 2018. "The 'gilets jaunes' movement is not a Facebook revolution." *The Conversation*, 13 December: <http://tiny.cc/grgregz>, last accessed 17 April 2021
- Silverstone, Roger. 2005. "The Sociology of Media and Communication." Pp. 188-207 in *The Sage International Handbook of Sociology*, edited by Craig Calhoun, Chris Rojek and Bryan S Turner. London: Sage.
- Soon, Carol and Kluver, Randy. 2014. "Uniting Political Bloggers in Diversity: Collective Identity and Web Activism." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 19(3): 500-15.
- Stetler, Harrison. 2019. "France's Yellow Vest Movement Comes of Age." *The Nation*, 5 February: <http://tiny.cc/lbxjsz>, last accessed 17 April 2021
- Sunstein, Cass R. 2007. *Republic.com 2.0*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Tarrow, Sidney. 1994 [2011]. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* – 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, Verta and Crossley, Alison Dahl. 2013. "Abeyance." Pp. 1-2 in *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Social and Political Movements*, edited by David A. Snow, Donatella della Porta, Bert Klandermans and Dough McAdam. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Tilly, Charles. 1986. *The Contentious French: Four Centuries of Popular Struggle*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- \_\_\_\_\_. 2004. *Social Movements, 1768-2004*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.
- Touraine, Alain. 1981. *The Voice and the Eye: An Analysis of Social Movements*, translated by Alan Duff. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Traverso, Enzo. 2019. "Understanding the Gilets Jaunes." *Verso Blog*, 15 February: <http://tiny.cc/hsgrez>, last accessed 17 April 2021
- Treré, Emiliano. 2015. "Reclaiming, proclaiming, and maintaining collective identity in the #YoSoy132 movement in Mexico: an examination of digital frontstage and backstage activism through social media and instant messaging platforms." *Information, Communication & Society* 18(8): 901-15.
- Tufekci, Zeynep. 2017. *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Van Laer, Jeroen and Van Aelst, Peter. 2010. "Internet and Social Movements Action Repertoires: Opportunities and Limitations." *Information, Communication & Society* 13(8): 1146-71.