3.8
RADICAL MEDIA

Sandra Jeppesen

Introduction

Radical media are central to the promotion of radical political ideas and actions, including developing and sharing radical analysis and discourses including the representation of marginalised or silenced voices, on the one hand, and by mobilising and reporting on contentious social protests and other direct actions, on the other. Radical media activists are thus key to the propagation of radical social movements, engaging in media and other activism from positions rooted within movements with whom they share social habitus, alternative values, organising practices and political vision. While some scholars suggest that radical media is a niche form of media with a small audience-reach limited to those already active in radical social movements, Jeppesen et al. (2014) have found that radical alternative media have several different objectives, the first two related to propagating ideas, and the second two related to mobilising actions.

Discourses

First, radical media makers often create small-scale or Do It Yourself (DIY) media projects such as zines or flyers which are shared among small groups primarily with the objective to create safe(r) spaces, scenes and communities of practices. Second, in creating community media with an anchor point, a media project can generate radical political analysis to influence or radicalise a broader related movement, e.g. an anarchist-feminist collective whose radio programme influences the mainstream feminist movement.

Actions

Third, protest media that are oriented towards mobilising the public to participate in mass movements or mobilisations can use the snowball effect, producing and sharing media virally to reach a wide audience. Fourth, global media strategies are used in multi-linguistic or visual forms that can support the development of international solidarity movements. This range of strategies, from small and local to large and global, demonstrates how radical media are not one thing, but rather radical media practices develop out of and respond to everyday needs within radical political social movements.

Given these four objectives, Chris Atton (2002) has found alternative media focus on two specific dimensions of media production: product and process. The product is the media output or content, from print and radio to video and online media, whereas the process is the way in which media producers organise themselves and structure their projects. Both product and process or structure challenge hegemonic or dominant media constructs and power.

Product

Content in radical media products is oriented towards radical social transformation, on multiple issues from austerity and capitalism to gender, sexuality, feminism, anti-racism, colonialism, disability, LGBTQ+ liberation, climate justice, border issues, police brutality and more, including ways in which many of these will play a role in any given issue. The content is distinct from alt-right news in that it is oriented towards social justice, and from fake news in that it is oriented towards the truth.

Process

The process is the way media production projects are organised, how decisions are made and ways in which alternative values are put into practice. There is a strong influence of social anarchism and autonomous Marxism in radical media, shaping media practices that include horizontal structures, power-sharing, task rotation, skill sharing, mentorship, anti-oppression practices and consensus decision-making. This contributes to social justice through the empowerment of participation in at least two ways: first, by developing a voice for the voiceless, and second, through horizontal organisational and ownership practices, establishing counter-power processes crucial to radical politics, which are discussed elsewhere in this book.

Controlling the means of production of representation (process) and the representations themselves (products), radical media shifts the sphere of the possible. Producing new and innovative visual, textual, aural and digital discourses to challenge dominant regimes of truth, radical media activists are simultaneously developing alternative value-based equitable relationships in practice. Moreover, directly challenging structures of domination, they create alternatively and sometimes experimentally structured media and arts production groups, networks, formats, platforms, work methods, outputs and institutions. Furthermore, in advocating for revolutionary social transformation with a counter-power strategy, media activists express opposition to power structures but they also build media networks that challenge 'the very survival of the power structure' (Downing, 2001, xi). This is key to understanding the revolutionary aims of radical media – it is not directed towards creating new content or democratising media through increased participation, which are liberal political goals, but towards challenging the very survival of dominant media structures, and thereby reclaiming media power.

Given this basic understanding of the objectives of radical media, it is important to understand four key dimensions of contemporary radical social movement media repertoires of communication: being rooted within radical social movements that attack the dominant power structures in society; organising in experimental anti-capitalist forms that challenge dominant media structures; developing radically transformative discursive and representational forms; and engaging in translocal and transmedia mobilisation networks to reclaim digital media power.

This chapter maps out five key media genres – print, audio, image, video and online – considering how they are reconceived by radical media practitioners. It critically analyses

Table 3.8.1 Key analytical dimensions of radical media by genre

	Social movements	*Representations*	*Structures*	*Digital networks*
Print	Autonomous journalism	Radical discursive formations	Anti-capitalist editorial collectives	Open editorial platforms
Audio	Community radio mobilisations	Voices of 'the voiceless'	Pirate radio hordes	Radical podcasts
Image	Activist art, posters	Radical image formations, comix	Radical community art spaces	Culture jamming, memes
Video	Livestreaming protest	Radical activist documentaries	Video activist collectives	Sousveillance
Online	Connective action	Transmedia mobilisations	Translocal mobilisations	Technopolitics

Source: Table devised and complied by the author.

how each radical media genre engages the four key dimensions outlined earlier: social movement participation, anti-capitalist organisational forms, transformative discursive representations and reclaiming digital networks (see Table 3.8.1). It then considers emergent debates, focusing on unresolved challenges, contradictions and tensions.

Print

Autonomous Journalism

Radical movements have long published autonomous journalism in independent newspapers, pamphlets and flyers, to develop and disseminate analysis around specific issues, mobilise and cover activist campaigns and protests, and otherwise participate in social movements. Autonomous journalists report on and support social movements, playing the role of activist and journalist simultaneously. They write articles providing critical analysis of movement issues, produce media content to support mobilisations and engage in direct actions as well as direct-action reporting from the perspective of protesters. Globally, there are many independent radical newspapers and magazines that might be considered autonomous journalism. *The Bristol Cable* in Bristol, UK is an autonomous newspaper that reports on local community issues, focusing on housing, racism, austerity, poverty and more. In Canada, *Briarpatch* is a long-running radical political magazine that reports from a radical left perspective with an emphasis on collective organising. *Indigenous Rising Media* is an anti-colonial news site that reports on social movement actions of the Indigenous Environmental Network, focusing on Indigenous mobilisation against resource extraction on treaty lands, demonstrating links between climate justice, colonisation and land rights.[1] Self-reporting allows activists to tell the truth about their movements and communities from an insider perspective. In intentionally reporting from an overt subject position, they disrupt the claim that journalism is objective, challenging the closed, top-down power structures of dominant or mainstream media systems. There are also important models of solidarity journalism based on the principle of foregrounding the voices of those affected, with allies in positions of relative privilege making space for those in marginalised or silenced communities to produce media (Jeppesen, 2016), and respecting the leadership of local communities (Sunkel & Girvan, 1973).

Multi-issue Radical Discursive Formations

Reporting from within radical social movements and marginalised communities, media activists generate new discursive formations through developing alternative media frames, or ways of thinking about and discussing issues. Mainstream media perpetuates a discursive regime of truth, repeating and entrenching the dominant or accepted way of thinking about issues, whereas radical media challenges these regimes of truth by revealing their assumptions, and providing a range of alternative perspectives from the viewpoint of people with different experiences and social locations within society that often are not interviewed or do not have access to representation in mainstream media. This includes reporting on multiple issues, and revealing ways in which they are connected and related to each other, helping to develop common ground among many groups who can act in solidarity once they see how their issues and therefore their achievement of liberation are linked. For example, *Brand* is an anarchist magazine produced in Stockholm, Sweden, since 1898 on radical political movements covering many different issues related to social class, oppression and liberation, promoting pacifism, reproductive rights and free love in a historical context, and more recently in 2000 writing about riots and other direct actions. Covering each of the issues mentioned here has led to writers from *Brand* magazine being charged with criminal offenses. This criminalisation of autonomous journalists reveals how crucial the construction of anti-authoritarian discourses is in challenging unjust laws and illegitimate power.

Intersectional Anti-capitalist Editorial Collectives

Radical media reject the editorial structures typically found in journalism or news organisations, with a top-down hierarchical structure. Mainstream media ownership models are shaped by corporate convergence and vertical integration, meaning that a few corporations control various forms of media – from telecommunications, cell phones, satellites and ISPs to newspapers, TV stations, radio stations and online platforms. Not only does this limit the viewing choices and thus global democratic debate on issues, it is also organised in top-down structures that will influence media content. Counter to this, radical media organise in often much smaller local editorial collectives where decision-making is shared among all members, writing is done collaboratively engaging strategies such as peer skill sharing and mentorship for new writers, and administrative tasks may be rotated or shared among participants. For example, zines, or small self-produced magazines, were printed and widely distributed, along with their music, by the Riot Grrrl movement from the 1990s. These zines were created by small groups of Riot Grrrls working together on designing, writing, copying and distributing them. Riot Grrrls were explicitly anti-capitalist and feminist in their content and organisational styles. However, these kinds of small-scale productions can often not offer any pay for the labour required to produce them, as they reject capitalist advertising or profit motives. In Barcelona, XNet addresses the unpaid labour challenge by generating funds to liberate media activists by providing them with a full year of sustainable income. Not constrained by the capitalist labour market, the 'liberated' media activist is then free to support radical media and social movement projects. Horizontal organising structures can challenge structures of oppression and power in mainstream media; however, they have also been critiqued for not offering enough checks and balances against informal power hierarchies, or providing enough structure for accountability and responsibility to be transparent.

Open Editorial Platforms

While most online mainstream news platforms offer some form of audience interactivity such as commenting, reposting or sharing content previously produced by paid professional journalists, autonomous journalism platforms operate somewhat differently. Content is produced voluntarily by unpaid unprofessional or semi-professional writers and journalists who may not know each other or the people maintaining the platform, but who nonetheless share political and social values as well as radical social movement objectives. Platforms are designed according to open editorial principles, so that anyone can post an article that they have written that they feel is appropriate to the platform. Often, there is no moderator, or only modest moderation to remove hate speech. One of the earliest such open editorial platforms that has been well documented is Indymedia, which came into existence in late 1999 to support and report on the Seattle anti-WTO activist mobilisations which included counter-summits, trainings and multi-day street protests. Indymedia was one of the first websites to provide live updates from protesters in the streets, and as such they were able to contradict and challenge the mainstream regime of truth regarding the mobilisations, which was largely sensationalist and inaccurate. Indymedia is still in existence in some global locations, such as Indymedia Athens which has been reporting on the Indignados of Greece movement from an anarchist perspective. But in other locations, it has fallen dormant, or been modified to take other shapes, such as the Media Co-op in Canada which is a multi-stakeholder cooperative originally with four chapters across Canada, and a national editorial collective that produces and distributes the *Dominion* magazine as well. Open editorial platforms struggle with issues such as hostile alt-right articles and trolling, particularly feminist news being trolled by aggressively misogynist comments, and anti-colonial anti-racist news trolled by racist anti-Indigenous comments. The tension remains unresolved in terms of how to create an open editorial policy without censorship, and how to deal with hateful trolling which is a pressing question for this genre of radical media.

Audio

Community Radio Mobilisations

Radio broadcasts are considered easier to produce than either print media, which requires writing and literacy skills, or video, which requires expensive equipment and editing skills. Non-corporate, not-for-profit radio stations, including community and campus radio, have historically been used by communities to further local aims, mobilise political actions and build community. For Clemencia Rodriquez (2001), access for community members to produce citizens' media allows them to engage in civic action, challenging neocolonial capitalist power structures. Building on her work, Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2007) propose four key dimensions to radical community media: they serve a community, function as an alternative to mainstream media, forge links with civil society and civic action from grassroots movements to policy change, and work as a partially visible rhizome. For example, in Colombia, community radio has been used to develop political consciousness, mobilising people to take action in their communities, engage in networking opportunities with neighbours through in-person interactions at the radio station, revealing the radical political functions of community radio beyond broadcasting (Murillo, 2003). Similarly, Radio Alice, which operated in Bologna in fascist Italy in the 1970s, brought people into the nearby radio station to broadcast public debates and promote civic action contesting fascism in Italy.

'Radio Alice actively challenged listener passivity and encouraged its audience members to become engaged in direct speech on the airwaves through relaying live call-ins aimed at unleashing strategic reports from the barricades, along with the unfiltered rage of protesters in the streets and the poetic laughter of the insurgent imagination in flight' (Langlois, Sakolsky & van der Zon, 2010, 6). In this sense, community radio functions as a public square to broadcast and amplify community conversations geared towards organising direct action and broadcasting from the scene of that action, directly challenging both media and state power. Due to transgressive content, community radio often faces repression by the state. Radio Alice, for example, was shut down and many activists arrested, charged with sedition (6).

Voice of the Voiceless

In terms of its function in generating transformative discursive representations, community, campus and other types of non-profit radio stations serve as the 'voice of the voiceless'. Communities that have been silenced, misrepresented, stereotyped or otherwise rendered voiceless by the regime of truth in a city, town or region can use broadcast radio stations to foster local voices, develop local skills in radio programming and production, and nurture leadership capacities. Speaking their own truth, communities create alternative discourses through conversations that they have together, and radio serves to amplify those conversations. For example, Radio Bubble, in Athens, Greece, broadcasting from its own café, served as a key organising hub during the 2011 anti-austerity protests, challenging the dominant discourse of the mainstream media about the inevitability of financial bailouts, and providing alternative economic discourses such as cooperative social economies, and mobilising people to take action against austerity measures (radiobubble.gr). While in Brazil, the MST or landless rural workers movement, active since the 1970s, has used local radio stations broadcasting from schools, their movement has also built to transmit important information not just about the movement to build consciousness around land use issues, but also to provide information regarding local seed distribution, road closures and other infrastructural or logistical information pertinent to the everyday life of their communities (Sartoretto). As Arundhati Roy indicates in the epigraph to this chapter, voicelessness is not natural or inevitable, but political and intentional on the side of the powerful who attempt to control discourse. Non-profit radio provides a space where people can quite literally speak together, combing to voice on the radio about what is happening in their communities, and develop the capacities to make change.

Pirate Radio

Pirate radio famously made an appearance in the cult classic, *American Graffiti*, where a DJ known as Wolfman Jack broadcasts music and aphorisms illegally from an unknown location. Where broadcast licences are not available, controlled by the state or prohibitively expensive, people have turned to pirate radio, broadcasting using home-made transmitters that can fit into a small tin, and thus can easily be transported to protests, located in a moving vehicle such as a car or bike, or hidden and moved to evade authorities. Pirate radio is an 'unlicensed form of radio broadcasting that relies on the airwaves for transmission' (Langlois, Sakolsky & van der Zon, 2010, 3) that embraces 'the radical imagination and the practice of direct action' (4), evading regulation, administration and sanctions by providing an entirely autonomous alternative. Its small size, easy construction and portability make it particularly appealing to activists wanting to set up temporary communications' alternatives. Pirate radio was particularly prevalent in the UK in the 1960s and 1970s, where activists set

up longer-term offshore radio stations on boats as an underground method of transmission, with programming ranging from radical political movement discourses to transgressive music genres. In the alterglobalisation movement in the 1990s and early 2000s, we saw evidence of 'the nomadic radio pirate strategically broadcasting the location and movements of the police to global justice activists during the heat of confrontation in the streets [that] engages in direct action by occupying the airwaves' (Langlois, Sakolsky & van der Zon, 2010, 4). While this tactic is now also used by livestreaming protest, discussed below, pirate radio has the advantage of still being viable if the state blocks or throttles the Internet during protests.

Podcasts

Today podcasts, or radio-like audio programmes streamed over the Internet, have emerged as a hybrid media form where people can easily record and upload interviews or other types of programming for a global audience. A noted podcast engaged in decolonising media on the east coast of Turtle Island (Canada) is Pjilasi Mi'kma'ki or Welcome to Mi'kma'ki, a bilingual Mi'kmaq and English podcast produced by a Mi'kmaq woman among communities engaged in anti-fracking activism in Elsipogtog.[2] The podcast covers issues such as the Sixties Scoop (the removal by the Canadian government of thousands of Indigenous children from their homes in the 1960s to be placed and raised in the homes of white people), title and treaty rights, the art and cultural relevance of baskets, and Indigenous governance models. By self-producing this knowledge from a position rooted within the community, deeper knowledge can be produced and shared with a broader audience. The use of the Mi'kmaq language develops trust and comfort levels among the interviewees, and recentres Indigenous experiences and voices largely absent in mainstream media. The Sixties Scoop podcast, for example, was picked up by various regional and national media, and the issue has now gained traction in the public sphere. As part of the radical media repertoire of communication, this particular podcast is rooted within social movement organising, exploring cutting-edge forms through its integral use of two languages and original soundscapes. Moreover, it generates new discursive and cognitive frames for understanding the deeply damaging impact of colonisation on children removed from their homes, thereby furthering anti-colonial movements and decolonising media. Like pirate radio, podcasts operate as temporary autonomous media zones, carving out their own discursive political spaces outside the regulatory frameworks of TV and radio broadcast, transgressing national borders, and challenging media dominance by commercial radio.

Image

Activist art Posters

Posters put up in public spaces are used to promote radical ideas, mobilise social movement actions and as an outlet for creative expression. Challenging the capitalist logic of the art world and the utilitarian logic of some political organising, artist collectives and cooperatives produces art with social messages, as well as organising their artistic production in more liberatory, horizontal forms. Image-based systems produced by activists challenge the dominant image systems of mainstream media, with respect to social class, race, gender, sexuality, beauty myths and more. They are also used to both inform and mobilise activists to participate in political protests or events such as anarchist bookfairs. While this traditional mode of mobilisation often serves as the public face and aesthetic of social movements, it has not

always been respected by radical activists and non-political artists alike. Activists often question the importance of art, labelling it an elite capitalist pursuit, while artists often critique political art for being too dogmatic. As Josh MacPhee and Erik Reuland, members of the Just Seeds Artists' Cooperative, explain, 'as anarchists, we have seen our politics denigrated by other artists; as artists, we have had our cultural production attacked as frivolous by activists' (2007, 3).[3] Just Seeds has produced a series of posters, for example, called 'Celebrating People's History' that depicts social movement struggles from the past and present. These posters produce alternative histories or histories from below through images that challenge dominant discourses on political issues.

Comic Journalism

Comic journalism is an art form frequently used by media activists to mobilise transformative discursive visual and textual representations. It subverts the expectations of comics by creating political and historical content, while also subverting the expectation that politics should be represented in formal texts. Joe Sacco, who first came to public attention with his critically acclaimed political graphic novel, *Palestine* (1997), has pioneered the form, building on the work of the underground comics scene (Worden, 2015). Culture jamming and political comic artists transform radical discourses into visual representations that combine print images with text to challenge hegemonic discourses and framing of issues. The comics collective, Dotterbolaget, is a radical queer transfeminist network of comic and graphic novel artists in Sweden (Dotterbolaget n.d.) that supports opportunities for their members to engage in creative cultural labour. A Dotterbolaget member, an indigenous woman from Chile living in Sweden, has engaged with members of the local immigrant community in her town to generate testimonials of their experiences around sexual violence, which were then sketched out as a comic with three versions of text in English, Swedish and Spanish. This comic challenges the silence, stigma, self-blame and victim blaming in experiences of sexual abuse, while integrating images and text, making it easy to read across cultures and literacy levels. Moreover, it engages new cognitive and discursive practices rooted in social movements engaged in intersectional politics considering sexual violence and sex work as often-racialised gender oppression in the context of social class, race, immigration and colonial relations.

Arts Collectives and Spaces

Radical political artists tend to organise themselves into collectives and arts spaces that reject not just the commercial imperative of artistic production but also the enforced isolation, and the concept of the lone genius artist, embracing instead practices of collaboration and resource sharing. In the US, for example, there is 'a growing community of radical artists [that includes] The Drawing Resistance traveling art show, the Beehive Collective poster project, the Celebrate People's History poster project and the Street Art Workers' (Stern 2007, 105). Many articulate the tension of wanting to make art against capitalism and having to survive in a capitalist economy. Courtney Daily, for example, would prefer to 'give things away or trade' (as cited in Stern, 2007, 106); Swoon says, 'I hate the idea of what I am making being narrowed down to its value as an object for investment or sale' (as cited in Stern, 2007, 106); Josh MacPhee argues that 'art should be affordable to people that are interested in it' (as cited in Stern, 2007, 106); and Chris Stain says that 'art becomes soulless and loses its value when produced for commercial purposes' (as cited in Stern, 2007, 106). Artist collectives challenge the individualist ideology of consumer capitalism by working cooperatively to

produce artwork, sharing resources and eschewing the gallery system of elitist hegemonic art production and consecration. In Canada, the Ste-Emilie Skillshare is an example of a community arts space that was opened up by a small collective of anti-racist queer and trans anti-authoritarian activists in Montreal to provide space for anti-racist organisers to make art in support of social movements (Jeppesen et al., 2016). Serving as both a safe space and a creative workshop, artist collectives radicalise ownership forms and organisational structures of studios and the gallery system. Moreover, they attempt to find ways to share their work for free, through barter and gift economies, or by exhibiting it for free in public spaces.

Culture Jamming and Memes

According to Leah Lievrouw, culture jamming is one of five activist genres covered in her book, *Alternative and Activist New Media* (2011). It operates in the social domain of popular culture, particularly targeting corporate advertising, and takes the form of appropriated images and text that subvert the designer's original meaning with the objective of humorous cultural critique. Mark Dery refers to culture jamming as hoaxes that jam the empire of signs, and includes 'media hacking, information warfare, terror-art, and guerrilla semiotics' (1993) in the mix. Guerrilla semiotics is a term first coined by Umberto Eco (1987) to describe fighting back against dominant culture at the level of decoding signs and signifiers. Culture jamming has its roots even further back, as Lievrouw argues that 'what makes culture jamming distinctive as a genre of alternative/activist new media is that it "mines" mainstream culture to reveal and criticise its fundamental inequities, hypocrisies, and absurdities, very much in the tradition of Dada and the Situationists'. Memes are a very specific form of culture jamming that reference a whole host of cultural signifiers turning them towards a recoded message, or what Jonah Peretti calls 'micromedia' (2001). While culture jamming has 'a degree of subversive power' (Lievrouw, 2011), it is open to reappropriation by mainstream media, and subject to 'the fragmentation and rapid turnover of ideas, images, and discourse' (Lievrouw, 2011). *Adbusters* magazine, the Billboard Liberation Front and the Surveillance Camera Players, who culture jammed magazine ads, billboards and surveillance cameras, respectively, remain classic examples of this form of radical media.

Video

Livestreaming Protest

'Video is increasingly used to communicate dissent' (Widgington, 2005, 107). Livestreaming of protests has become a mainstay in the radical repertoire of communication. Reporting and providing live commentary, video activists use technologies to document protest from the street, where the live-streamer is also participating in the protest. The livestream broadcast is thus not just a media tactic but also a protest tactic – a protest media tactic. Like the Mi'kmaq podcast, being rooted in the movement fosters authenticity and trust, closing the distance between the reporter and the reported. Ferguson Black Lives Matter (BLM) livestreamed the 2014 protests against the police shooting death of black teenager Michael Brown by a white police officer. Livestream activists, such as hip-hop artist and Clemson communications professor Chenjerai Kumanyika, participated in the demonstrations, livestreaming footage as protests unfolded. While livestreaming protest, activists maintain a constant video uplink, interact with audience members on the livestream channel and post the livestream link on social media using hybrid media forms to garner a wider audience. Kumanyika's livestream

of the 2014 BLM Ferguson protests generated over twenty-thousand views (UMassAmherst, 2015; Kumanyika, 2015, 2016a, 2016b). This is a quintessential example of rooted reporting from within a social movement. Engaging a team of media activists in multiple locations, it reconfigures experimental technologies to propagate counter-hegemonic anti-racist public discourses, reframes issues of anti-Black police brutality from the perspective of those directly affected and recentres marginalised or silenced voices largely absent from mainstream media. It also encourages viewers to participate in the action, by joining the protest, posting the link on social media or contributing live comments.

Activist Documentaries

Like livestream footage, activist documentaries provide alternative image-based narratives on issues that contest the current political and discursive regimes. Documentary has 'always claimed a particular place for itself in the process of media citizenship' (Dovey, 2014), providing space for civic engagement through the creating of more authentic image systems. Shifting towards the digital media ecology, digital documentaries generate greater participatory frameworks that 'constitute dynamic, mobile, generative experiences' for audience members as they 'can be linked to, liked, forward, promoted, posted' (Dovey, 2014). Moreover, 'The online documentary is contingent, mutable, dynamic: its meanings generated through the user's interactions with it' (2014). Our Planet TV, for example, in Tokyo, Japan, has been producing documentaries since 2001.[4] Their mandate is to produce documentaries that distribute information 'from the citizen's own standpoint' (About Us). They worked with director Oguma Eiji on the documentary film *Tell the Prime Minister* (2015) that provided an inside look at the anti-nuclear movement after the Fukushima reactor meltdown caused by the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami. This film innovatively integrated crowdsourced digital footage found online, including footage by videographers from OurPlanetTV, to create a collaborative grass-roots documentary. The post-Fukushima anti-nuclear movement included a diverse array of social groups: 'These included farmers and fisher folk confronting radioactive contamination, housewives alert to the radioactive contamination of foodstuffs and the special risk to infants and children, intellectuals critical of nuclear power in an earthquake-prone nation, and other social groups' (Eiji, 2016). The diversity of perspectives in the crowdsourced-footage documentary benefits from shifts towards participatory, collaborative production. Traditional political documentary producers and collaborative crowdsourced footage such as *Tell the Prime Minister* can reframe dominant discursive regimes by circulating images and voices from global social struggles.

Video Activist Collectives

'It's important to note that an activist video is not by definition a documentary film that tries to capture a slice of reality by following real people through real events' (Widgington, 2005, 112), as formats, styles, contributors, objectives and organising structures vary greatly. Many video activist collectives organise themselves horizontally. Integrated into grass-roots non-hierarchical social movements, video activists engage in similar organising strategies and structures. 'Video activism reaches beyond video making. It also delves into the process of organizing by forming collective structures to assist in the production and distribution of activist videos' (Widgington, 2005, 105). At video activist film screenings, such as those organised by *Cinema Politica*, 'the largest volunteer-run, community and campus-based documentary-screening network in the world', the format of the screening challenges the

film industry's capitalist logic. Entry is free or by donation; activist groups table outside the cinema with flyers, posters, zines, books, patches and other media; and participants appearing in the film may be present at the screening as they themselves are activists there to discuss how people can support their movement. Video activist collectives thus challenge the mainstream capitalist logic of the film industry, organising as anti-capitalists; producing social change through more socially just image systems and changing social relationships from the ground up by bridging the distance between who appears in films, who participates in social movements and who has access to representation. Closing this gap is a direct challenge to Guy Debord's 'society of the spectacle' where images seen on-screen are critically analysed as distant mind-numbing representations of constructed desires impossible to reach, thus crushing the viewer's capacity for desire and even life itself.

Sousveillance

Radical activists have long used photography and video activism to document direct actions, using footage of arrests to exonerate activists in court. Citizens also use video cameras to document police violence, starting with the controversial case of Rodney King, a taxi driver whose beating by four LAPD officers in 1991was filmed by a community member in a nearby building, forwarded to a news station and shown worldwide. One of the earliest cases of police *sousveillance* by bystanders, the video nonetheless was insufficient to convict the officers. With the advent of ubiquitous cell phone cameras, media activists have been using reverse surveillance or *sousveillance* to hold the police accountable for their actions (Abu-Laban, 2015; Stole, Williams, Mitchell & Pandell, 2016), reversing the act of putting citizens under surveillance by turning the eye of the camera on the powerful. The police shooting of Alton Sterling on July 5, 2016 followed by the police shooting of Philando Castile on July 6, 2016 were both livestreamed to social media. The people close to the victims were powerless to prevent the death, but documented unfolding events, images which generated media power and mobilised widespread protests (Stole et al., 2016).[5] Functioning in the digital domain, *sousveillance* reclaims the storytelling function of mass media by distributing a direct account of events, circumventing not just the editorial gatekeeping and framing function of mainstream journalism but also bypassing police spokesperson structures that can hide actions behind the blue line, the so-called brotherhood of police unions and internal self-investigation. *Sousveillance* has also been used by a group at Goldsmiths University in London, UK to show wrongdoing by those in positions of power in the case of the 'left to die' boat – a refugee ship in the Mediterranean 'in which sixty-three migrants lost their lives while drifting for fourteen days within the NATO maritime surveillance area' (Forensic Architecture, 2012; Heller, n.d.). A data justice research team was able to use this surveillance data to implicate NATO and other ships in the area. 'The Forensic Oceanography report turned the knowledge generated through surveillance means into evidence of responsibility for the crime of nonassistance' (Forensic Architecture, 2012). Forensically analysed state surveillance data were used to charge the state with wrongdoing in sixty-three refugee deaths.

Online

Connective Action

New affordances of participatory culture in the era of digitisation include affiliation, expression, collaborative problem-solving and circulations (Jenkins, 2006). These lend

themselves as well to social movement mobilisations that can be participated in by millions of people who do not know each other, have a language in common and will never be at the same event. Nonetheless, the mobilisation frames and political demands and actions will be synchronised and coordinated through participatory culture. Bennett and Segerberg have found that the pre-network-society logic of collective action has been supplanted by what they call the logic of connection action (2012). Their study of the Indignados or 15M movement in Spain was based on a rejection of political parties, unions and other powerful groups, and a turn towards 'the richly layered digital and interpersonal communication networks centering around the media hub of *Democracia real YA!*' (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, 741) and the on-the-ground organising of protest camps in the squares, what Paolo Gerbaudo calls the hybrid strategy of 'tweets and the streets' (2012). Eschewing collective action frames, these new digital protest networks instead provide 'interactive digital media and easy-to-personalize action themes' (742) such as the Indignados or 'indignant ones' of the 15M movement, or 'We are the 99%' of the Occupy movement. These connective action frames are then powerfully mobilised through social media distribution, and some groups in Spain such as XNet were able to both establish an emotional or affective connection for participants, and to hack the algorithms of Facebook and Twitter to create trending topics on these two and other social media platforms. Further digital opportunities include website organisations, event notices, distribution networks and reposted links, among others (753). These online strategies provide not just media networks but participatory structures for communicative action that are peer to peer and face to face rather than top-down and authoritarian.

Transmedia Mobilisations

The theory and practices of connective action take it as given that activists will have recourse to and be engaged in producing a multiplicity of media genres, types and styles. These can be both analogue and digital, and they can be produced by anyone in the movement, and shared hand to hand in person or peer to peer online. This multiplicity of media, Costanza-Chock notes, is transmediated: 'Transmedia mobilization involves engaging the social base of the movement in participatory media making practices across multiple platforms… produc[ing] multimodal movement narratives that reach and involve diverse audiences' (Costanza-Chock, 2011, 113). Transmedia mobilisations create, share, remix, repost, comment and redistribute all genres of media, 'strengthening movement identity formation and outcomes' (113). For example, photocopied anarchafeminist zines may be scanned and uploaded to an activist blog or website as a downloadable PDF, and then shared via Facebook, linked via Twitter, images can be shared on Instagram, etc. The Occupy movement is an excellent example of how this works: 'Media practices within Occupy are marked by extensive offline, analogue, poster and print based, and "low-tech" forms of media production, in parallel with cutting-edge technology development and use (autonomous wireless networks, hackathons, creation of new tools and platforms). In many cases, Occupy activists make and circulate media elements across platforms (including analogue media forms and channels)' (Costanza-Chock, 2012, 378). Transmedia mobilisations are a form of intensifying collective intelligence where the discursive shifts and new knowledge produced in total are much greater than the sum of the parts. As activists at distributed geographical locations engage with each other's multimodal media repertoires of contention and communication, global movements benefit from and contribute to the collective shift in the dominant regime of truth.

Translocal 'Banner' Mobilisations

This global collective shift is also reflected in what Uri Gordon calls 'banner' movements, or movements organising under the same banner (Gordon, 2008, 12–15) where activists 'may be on the other side of the world, but they do not require a club, a party, or a shared ideological frame to make the connection' (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, 753). The exchange of ideas, movement frames, analysis, political demands and action repertoires results in what I am calling translocal mobilisations, defined as a local social movement action that is part of a global mobilisation using recognisably similar repertoires of contention and communication, and shifting them to suit their specific local situation. SlutWalk is an example of a feminist translocal mobilisation that first emerged in Toronto, Canada in 2011 after a police officer told women at York University that to combat rape they should 'avoid dressing like sluts' (Carr, 2013, 24). Toronto activists organised the first SlutWalk against rape culture – defined as the predominance of social attitudes and behaviours that normalise sexual harassment, abuse and rape – with subsequent SlutWalks in over fifty cities. For example, in Delhi, India, to protest targeted rapes of call centre workers, educated women or women who go out at night, as well as other issues such as female infanticide and honour killings, activists organised a SlutWalk campaign demanding that women have the right to safety and respect. However, protesters were encouraged to dress 'normally', dropping the locally controversial emphasis on the so-called slutty clothing (Carr, 2013, 26). Similarly in London, UK, a group called 'Hijabs, Hoodies & Hotpants' joined a breakaway march within the SlutWalk protest, with participants emphasising that rape 'has absolutely nothing to do with what you wear, and loads of women that are covered head to toe get raped' (Lim & Fanghanel, 2013, 9). The banner of SlutWalk thus spreads as a translocal mobilisation, with critiques of global rape culture translated into locally powerful messages and movements. Structurally, nobody owns SlutWalk; rather, many groups have taken up this banner to mobilise on their own terms in ways that have challenged not just global rape culture but also the dominance of Western liberal feminism.

Technopolitics

Technopolitics can be defined as 'a complex blend of technological knowledge and digital expertise used for radical political purposes with the technology itself seen as a site of contestation' (Treré et al., 2017, 413). Technopolitics emphasises anti-authoritarian or anarchist horizontal social processes utilised within the free culture, open source and hacker movements, while extending radical activist technological practices engaged by programmers, social media platform users and other so-called freedom technologists (Postill, 2016). While some technopolitics activists focus on hacking the Facebook, Twitter and other algorithms, others emphasise movement ownership of ICTs including social movement websites. The Spanish Indignados are well known for their technopolitics practices (Toret et al., 2013). They used collaborative authoring strategies, where online document sharing enabled activists to co-author documents without being co-present to develop analysis, discuss policy and more, attributing new knowledge and ideas to the movement, thus challenging the enclosure of knowledge by sharing it for free and not claiming individual authorship, ownership or copyright, rejecting the notion of activist superstars or intellectuals and instead focusing on collective intelligence. Some groups participating in the Indignados also used Titan pads to take minutes at general assemblies, providing publicly accessible documentation of collective decision-making. Most importantly, activists have long asserted the importance of

movement ownership of digital media platforms; building on this, technopolitical strategies emphasise ownership models of websites, blogs and platforms, so their work does not profit capitalist media conglomerates. 'By creating independent communication infrastructure, activists seek to contribute to the efforts of contemporary progressive social movements to shape the world according to principles of justice, equality, and participation' (Milan, 2013, 2). This ownership model usually also means that the radical media outlet or platform will be organised in an intersectional anti-capitalist way, against hierarchies, with consensus decision-making, task rotation, skill and resource sharing, and often a great deal of unpaid communicative labour, disavowing the economic imperatives of mainstream media.

Conclusion: Radical Media Contradictions and Challenges

The Contradiction of Social Media

The Benefit of Participation

Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat and Twitter, facilitate interactive media content production and distribution among millions of users worldwide. They offer a sense of empowerment through participatory interaction, and have been touted as key to the success of movements such as the Arab Spring being dubbed the 'Twitter Revolution' by some. For example, in the Greek Indignados or Aganaktismenoi movement, the original call to occupy Syntagma Square in Athens went out in a Facebook post, and one of the main sites of mobilisation and debate was the Facebook page of the Indignados of Syntagma Square.

The Exploitation of Capitalist Ownership

Based on Antonio Negri's concept of the social factory, media activists understand digital media 'as a form of free labour exploited and appropriated for capital accumulation by corporations, brands and advertising' (Dovey, 2014). For example, when users post content on Facebook, they assign its copyright to Facebook, while generating personal metadata through the social reward system of Likes, which is mined, aggregated and sold to advertisers (Cohen, 2013). Facebook generated $17.1 billion in ad revenue in 2015, and in 2016, it made $5.2 billion in the first quarter (Seetharaman, 2016), 80% from mobile ads (Kokalitcheva, 2015).[6] Thus, social media activists directly generate profits for social media corporations, without receiving any payment for this work. Moreover, they are directly supporting a capitalist political economy of social media through their movement work against capitalism. Social media labour has a gendered and racialised dimension, as women, queer and trans, and people of colour turn increasingly to social media as their voices are excluded from mainstream media; however, their work risks being appropriated for the profit of white males (Jeppesen et al., forthcoming).

The Threat of Police Surveillance

Social media users are vulnerable to police surveillance, as dialogues, debates, action plans and personal locations are publicly available on platforms, and have been scraped by the police to trace and prosecute activists. 'The dangers posed by public discussions, organisations, and networks being observed, monitored, archived and censored by corporate enterprises have serious implications for cyber activism and for social movement organizing online'

(Flesher Fominaya & Gillan, 2017, 389). Sometimes, this plays a role in predictive policing, informing decisions to pre-emptively arrest protest organisers before mass convergences. Social media data can also be invoked in court cases against activists.

The Success of Algorithm Hacking

Technopolitics activists in the Spanish Indignados discovered how the Facebook and Twitter algorithms worked, developing and sharing coordinated plans to collectively exploit or 'ride the algorithm', so that their posts and reposts would go viral. These practices were skill-shared horizontally, making them available beyond the small sphere of tech-savvy activists (Toret et al., 2013; Treré et al., 2017).

The Challenge of Sustainable Funding

Radicalising Resource Strategies

Rejecting most forms of advertising, radical media projects need to develop resources through nontraditional sources and practices. Using digital platforms, some turn to crowd-funding, with specific guidelines to ensure funding is consistent with the political content of their media. Other media collectives will engage in ethical advertising, partnering with groups they share values with. Yet, others will engage in resource sharing with like-minded groups, tabling at each other's events, sharing offices or mentoring new activists in media production, horizontal processes and anti-oppression practices.

Disavowing the Economic

Pierre Bourdieu (1993) argues that avant-garde producers will often disavow the economic imperative of cultural production, preferring to produce for an engaged audience who are also producers, and eschewing the need to make money from their work. In radical media, this disavowal has two implications: first, the media producer must have an outside means of economic support, and second, there are non-capitalist avenues for producing, distributing and valuing media. Not legitimated by mainstream journalist organisations, radical media is self-legitimating, dependent on a *produser* audience, a radical political community that generates and consumes content.

Paid vs. Unpaid Labour

Disavowing the economic means some radical media projects consider media production a labour of love, rather than paid employment. Strike, for example, an alternative journalism project in London, UK that produces both a website and a newspaper, do not pay people for media work, as they believe people should write for strictly political reasons. Other projects, such as the Bristol Cable, a radical newspaper produced in Bristol, UK, believe that it is important to pay alternative journalists; they generate funds through monthly sustainer donations as small as £1–2 and are continuously increasing the number of hours per week they can pay employees for. Some projects incorporate anti-oppression or decolonisation politics into their decisions regarding who should be paid for media labour. For example, Ricochet Media in Canada, an online news source, ran a successful Indigenous Reporting crowdfunding campaign as a decolonising media practice.

The Controversy of Grants

Some alternative media producers can sometimes gain access to public or private grants to fund their projects on a temporary basis. These grants are controversial for several reasons. Media activists who are anti-state might question the legitimacy of the state as a funder for their work, as it may limit their capacity to critique the state, or in other words, their political media content would have to be toned down or they might risk losing their funding. Media activists with critiques of corporate or private funding schemes might similarly question the ethics of the funder and their potential demand to censor or control editorial output or organisational structures. For example, Indymedia was at one point offered a substantial grant from the Ford Foundation; however, the international network came to consensus to reject the funding as they had serious critiques of the ethics and politics of Ford (Lievrouw, 2011). On the other hand, some media projects find that grants are an excellent way to access short-term funding for specific initiatives, and moreover they may believe that taxpayers should fund alternative media organisations. For example, Ricochet Media in Canada was successfully able to access funds from the City of Vancouver to report on homelessness in the city. Some media activists find grants very difficult to access, and have experienced racialised and/or gendered biases in the selection process and outcomes (Jeppesen et al., 2018).

Conclusion

What emerges in this brief sketch of the five genres of radical media and their approaches to social movements, representations, structures and digital networks is a complex series of critiques of the current media ecology undertaken through radicalising and perhaps even revolutionising media production practices. Rather than orienting themselves towards the economic imperative of mainstream media, radical alternative media do not just focus on generating alternative representations in content. They contravene and call into question the so-called objectivity of representation touted by the mainstream, support social movement representations, develop organisational structures focused on self-determination and horizontalism, and engage in participatory digital networks from grass-roots power-sharing perspectives. The VOID Network in Athens, Greece offers an excellent example of this. In existence for more than thirty years now, they operate with the objective of generating excellent cultural outputs that can effectively showcase the talents within their community. They do this through organising massive cultural events such as hip-hop or techno shows with thousands of participants, and by developing community-owned and -run infrastructure, such as squatted theatre spaces, thereby developing social or sharing economies that are community rather than profit-oriented and generating prefigurative explorations of the possible or 'an image from the future'.

Notes

1 http://indigenousrising.org/.
2 https://pjilasimikmaki.wordpress.com/.
3 justseeds.org.
4 ourplanet-tv.org.
5 cinemapolitica.org.
6 statistia.com.