From irony to despair: An "organic" model of resistance strategies in the era of surveillance and big data

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Abstract

In an era of surveillance and big data, we aim to interpret resistance strategies and tactics beyond the individuals and groups that employ them. We propose a model for interpreting resistance, covering power asymmetries between different actors, and incorporating social justice claims. The model sets out four main strategies: a) ironic, based on communication and aesthetics; b) deliberative, based on cooperation; c) agonistic, based on confrontation; and d) despairing, based on open and direct conflict provoked by the discontent of a multitude assembled as a unified actor. The model moves from individual reflections and initiatives supporting democratic values, to the collective – and sometimes violent – demand for a new social order. There are two scales where this power of resistance can operate: the micro-macro level of politics; and the exceptional or generative level of social change, allowing surveillance studies to be linked to other social fields. Our results indicate that, rather than being isolated tactics, the four strategies display an organic and ecological sense of interdependence. When the four strategies are maximized at any given time, the conditions are created for a 'perfect' situation of resistance to bring out deep changes in many sociopolitical orders.

Keywords: resistance; strategies; big data; surveillance; data justice; hacktivism

Resum. *De la ironia a la desesperació: un model «orgànic» d'estratègies de resistència en l'era de la vigilància i el big data*

La resistència és nodal, interseccional i opera com una multitud. En l'era de la vigilància i el big data, el nostre objectiu és comprendre les estratègies i tàctiques de resistència més enllà dels actors que les duen a terme. Proposem un model per interpretar els enfocaments de la resistència, les asimetries de poder entre els diferents actors i la incorporació de respostes de justícia social. El model planteja quatre estratègies principals: *a*) irònica, basada en la comunicació i l'estètica; *b*) deliberativa, construïda sobre la cooperació; *c*) agonística, arrelada en la confrontació; i *d*) desesperada, basada en el conflicte obert i directe, provocat pel descontentament d'una multitud que actua com a actor unificat. Aquest model avança des de les reflexions i iniciatives individuals a favor dels valors democràtics fins a la reivindicació col·lectiva —i a vegades violenta— d'un nou ordre social. Existeixen dues escales en les quals pot operar aquest poder de resistència: el nivell micro-macro en les polítiques i el nivell excepcional-generatiu de canvi social, la qual cosa permet vincular els estudis de vigilància a altres agendes socials. Els nostres resultats evidencien que les estratègies mostren un sentit orgànic i ecològic d'interdependència en lloc de servir-se de tàctiques aïllades. De fet, quan les quatre estratègies es maximitzen en un moment donat, es creen les condicions idònies per a una situació «perfecta» de resistència, capaç de produir canvis profunds en diversos ordres sociopolítics.

Paraules clau: resistència; estratègies; big data; vigilància; justícia de les dades; hacktivisme

Resumen. *De la ironía a la desesperación: un modelo «orgánico» de estrategias de resistencia en la era de la vigilancia y el big data*

La resistencia es nodal, interseccional y opera como una multitud. En la era de la vigilancia y el big data, nuestro objetivo es comprender las estrategias y tácticas de resistencia más allá de los actores que las llevan a cabo. Proponemos un modelo para interpretar los enfoques de la resistencia, las asimetrías de poder entre los distintos actores y la incorporación de respuestas de justicia social. El modelo plantea cuatro estrategias principales: *a*) irónica, basada en la comunicación y la estética; *b*) deliberativa, construida sobre la cooperación; *c*) agonística, arraigada en la confrontación; y *d*) desesperada, basada en el conflicto abierto y directo, provocado por el descontento de una multitud que actúa como actor unificado. Este modelo avanza desde las reflexiones e iniciativas individuales a favor de los valores democráticos hasta la reivindicación colectiva —y a veces violenta— de un nuevo orden social. Existen dos escalas en las que puede operar este poder de resistencia: el nivel micro-macro en las políticas y el nivel excepcional-generativo de cambio social, lo que permite vincular los estudios de vigilancia a otras agendas sociales. Nuestros resultados evidencian que las estrategias muestran un sentido orgánico y ecológico de interdependencia en lugar de servirse de tácticas aisladas. De hecho, cuando las cuatro estrategias se maximizan en un momento dado, se crean las condiciones idóneas para una situación «perfecta» de resistencia, capaz de producir cambios profundos en diversos órdenes sociopolíticos.

Palabras clave: resistencia; estrategias; big data; vigilancia; justicia de los datos; hacktivismo

1. Introduction

Many scholars argue that surveillance brings visibility, representation, meaning and material opportunities for people (Lyon, 2007; Wilson & Norris, 2017; Gill, 2019). Surveillance is a social system different to other systems (education, employment, science, or the economy), yet it is intertwined with and has an impact on them. Surveillance relates to concrete actors and tactics, but it also creates power asymmetries and resistance (Minocher & Randall, 2020). Indeed, classical definitions of surveillance connect it to social structures. For example, Foucault (1983) relates surveillance to disciplinary systems that aim to normalize certain behaviors and social relations. Additionally, Deleuze (1991) emphasizes surveillance as a central issue in "control societies" that modulate individuals' behavior. Taking this into consideration, surveillance can also be analyzed by focusing on the key strategies and actions employed by agents who resist the power of the "gaze."

One approach to resistance to surveillance relates to meaning and identity. Acknowledging how surveillance technologies can render and represent data from a specific source and technological tool is a first step in understanding resistance. In recent decades, more people have become aware of surveillance mechanisms that have an impact in the life of surveilled subjects (Couldry & Mejias, 2020). Instances covered by the media, such as Edward Snowden's leaks on mass surveillance in the United States or the Cambridge Analytica scandal, which affected elections in several countries, are just some examples of surveillance deriving from the production and management of *dataveillance* (big data + surveillance). In that sense, power relations are evident, and resistance can be conceptualized as "breaking or disrupting those flows and creating spatiotemporal gaps between the watcher and watched" (Ball, 2005: 89). Other commentators, such as Mann et al. (in Marx, 2003), propose "*sousveillance*" as counter-surveillance. Sousveillance utilizes technology to confront bureaucratic organizations by inverting the gaze toward the watchers and resisting surveillance through non-compliance and interference, including blocking, distorting, masking, refusing and counter-surveilling.

A second approach to resistance to surveillance can be related to specific actors and groups. That is, resistance is a practice that connects agents in a governance network. For example, Martin, Van Brakel & Bernhard (2009), in a study of the United Kingdom National Identity Scheme, found that the concept of resistance focused on the relationship between the surveyor and the surveilled, neglecting other relevant actors. They proposed a map of complex resistance relationships beyond the watchers and the watched, to expand the list of relevant actors beyond the immediate surveillance context (to include, for example, the media, trade unions and civil organizations). In that sense, these authors highlighted the need to understand multi-actor resistance relationships at various levels of the scheme's development, focusing on elements of the structural level of politics.

Finally, a third approach to resistance and surveillance hinges on the demand to connect both domains to social justice. Dencik, Hintz & Cable (2017) argued that, in the wake of the Snowden leaks, surveillance has predominantly centered on techno-legal responses relating to the development and use of encryption, as well as policy advocacy around privacy and data protection. They found that there was ambiguity around this kind of anti-surveillance resistance to broader activist practices, and that critical responses to the Snowden leaks were confined to expert communities. Hence, they introduced the notion of "data justice", as resistance to surveillance needed to be (re)conceptualized around broader social justice agendas relating to democratic procedures, the discrimination and exclusion of certain groups, deteriorating working conditions, and the dehumanization of decision-making and interaction on sensitive issues (Dencik et al., 2022). In our view, incorporating social justice agendas in surveillance requires adding macrosocial components (such as power asymmetries) to analyze resistance.

Given the above, how can we devise a way to integrate these approaches? Our approach is to develop a model to interpret the strategies and tactics of resistance, the power asymmetries between different actors, and the incorporation of social justice responses. We propose a model based on power, understood as a potential or effective action that can be conducted or framed by another actor, which in turn leads to a reaction or resistance. Thus, this study proposes a scale in which power and resistance can operate; this scale should encompass both the agency level and the meta-agency or structural level.

The agency level involves direct tactics to challenge the watcher-watched dynamic, such as subverting surveillance technologies and symbols to mediate power and identity. This level can be identified at the molecular level, as well as at the micro- and meso- level, where resistance can be enacted. The meta-agency level addresses systemic conditions on the macro-social scale, where resistance tactics can be created to overturn the logic between watchers and the watched, altering the performance of surveillance and politics in a broader sense.

2. Resistance and strategies

Before presenting a model of resistance strategies, it is essential to ask, "Who is resisting?" Hardt & Negri's (2004) concept of the "multitude" provides a useful framework in that regard. Their work has informed subsequent studies, which have reflected on its limitations (Bowring, 2004) and highlighted its potential for analyzing contemporary collective action (Tampio, 2009). Unlike traditional notions such as "masses" or "people", the multitude comprises diverse individuals with unique identities who unite in collective resistance while maintaining autonomy, particularly against global inequalities. Virno (2003) highlights the multitude's embrace of diversity, and Cinnamon (2020) connects it to the "techno-political multitude", in which digital technologies enable decentralized and nodal resistance. Unlike monolithic enti-

ties, the multitude supports intersectional resistance, spanning class, gender, nationality and identity in the digital era. However, we support an interpretation model in which, under certain circumstances, the heterogeneous multitude can assemble as a "unified" actor to engage in resistance strategies and tactics.

Strategy and tactics were initially adapted from the military sphere to promote resistance by the civilian multitude (Colebrook, 2001; Smith, 2007). Strategies can refer to different types of general logic that bring together diverse practices to defy surveillance and the sociopolitical order. Tactics, on the other hand, refer to the concrete actions carried out by resistance actors, such as aesthetic interventions, discussion forums, computer hacking, the leaking of secrets, and riots. Below, we identify and propose four types of strategy that enable us to analyze resistance. The strategies connect individual actors (agency) with the macro social level (structure) and link surveillance to broader political agendas. The four strategies are a) ironic, based on communication and aesthetics; b) deliberative, based on cooperation; c) agonistic, based on confrontation; and d) despairing, based on a direct conflict that brings the multitude together as a "unified actor".

2.1. Ironic strategy

In the case of the ironic strategy, resistance involves the representation of the surrounding world and of ourselves through the construction of narratives. Politics is narration, storytelling and sharing in/struggling to achieve a world vision with other people (Arendt, 1958). Thus, this first type of resistance corresponds to the arena of communication that connects people. Under this strategy, rational communication, feelings and emotions, figures of speech, artistic representation and other forms of language converge.

The name comes from Rorty's irony theory, which operates chiefly as a literary-critical stance grounded in the contingency of language and belief (Rorty, 1989). However, the ironic strategy adapts this posture into a dynamic communicative practice aimed at social resistance through mediated reinterpretation. Whereas Rorty's ironist maintains a skeptical detachment from metaphysical certainties, and reconstitutes belief networks as an interpretive "method", the ironic strategy transforms this stance into an activist tool, weaving tropes, narrative twists and humor into public discourse to subvert entrenched norms and catalyze change even within the realm of language itself. We also choose to label this strategy ironic because irony is a rhetorical figure that, by default, is based on a double-layered subversion of normative representations. According to neuroscientist Weems (2014), humor is, by nature, confrontational. Additionally, it serves as an act of resistance (Sørensen, 2008; Weaver et al., 2016).

For instance, during the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, K-pop fans worldwide mobilized on social media platforms such as Twitter and TikTok to disrupt digital surveillance and the coordination of counter-protests by

far-right groups. They employed irony, humor and massive coordinated spamming – such as flooding police surveillance apps and hashtags with K-pop fancams – to drown out messages of hate and prevent the tracking of protesters (Lee & Kao, 2021; Johnson, Li & Mitchell, 2024). These tactics, deeply rooted in fandom culture, exemplify how irony and affective labor are used to undermine dominant narratives and digital infrastructures of control. In this case, the ironic strategy operates within algorithmic systems, repurposing entertainment content to resist political repression and mass surveillance.

Another example is culture jamming, which ranges from manipulating semiotic codes to physically altering capitalist products. These practices have sought to reappropriate commercial social networks in order to strengthen resistance to the collection and commodification of information. In the last decade, these practices have blossomed among hacker activists (Coleman, 2015). In this case, humor has been used to question technology companies that serve to surveil citizens and support authoritarian regimes. In more recent cases, digital memes – conveying irony, sarcasm and other types of humor – have spread very quickly and are useful tools for corroding the normalization of social practices across many cultures (Yang & Jiang, 2015; Soh, 2020). The re-signification of certain viral images on the Internet has made it possible to present a critical view of surveillance, which is often seen as an integral part of Western culture, and to appeal to the daily lives and personal interactions of the general public (Gangneux, 2014) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. An example of a meme about privacy and surveillance

Source: <https://www.privacyandsurveillance.org/?p=228>.

2.2. Deliberative strategy

The deliberative strategy consists of resistance as cooperation. This strategy extends beyond the communication dimension and begins to address the material and structural levels of politics through direct interventions. Based on the deliberative theory of politics, it supports "not agonism, but agreement/disagreement underpinned by reciprocity […], not an articulation of social movements, but free association and affiliation" (Hands, 2007: 91). It aims to join forces to take action, taking deliberation and the individual as core values.

A key tactic is digitally correct hacktivism. According to Jordan & Taylor (2004), this type of hacking promotes the right to free and secure access to digital content. Hacking can encourage confrontational tactics and even be used against those who resist. Still, its commitment to access to information can potentially prevent digital data becoming a monopolistic domain managed by powerful state and commercial players. Even if hacking tactics are contingent and not necessarily fixed in terms of political orientation and content (Kaufmann, 2020), they can be combined with ongoing projects or actions that challenge surveillance's visibility and invisibility schemes.

In this sense, an example of a continuous tactic is the free software movement, which advocates for the collaborative design of applications and software, preserving decentralized information architectures and enabling privacy technologies that limit intrusive surveillance programs. No one who uses computers, smartphones or the Internet today goes a day without relying on free software, whether it connects to servers, operating systems or local or online applications. According to hacker logic (Himanen, 2010), free software advocates for the collective generation and distribution of the primary economic resource in the era of big data, namely information (Benkler, 2006).

Another tactic in the deliberative strategy is encryption. For example, the Tor project (The Onion Router) proposes anonymous navigation on the Internet, as retrieved information travels through several intermediate stations before reaching its destination. The tool has proved useful in cases of state control. This tactic has been employed by activists seeking to maintain communication in repressive regimes and by leakers of sensitive information, to release it to the public (Chertoff, 2017). For instance, LGBTQ+ activists in countries with criminalizing laws have used Tor to safely organize, share resources and maintain transnational solidarity (Collier, 2020).

Another example is Pretty Good Privacy (PGP), an initiative aimed at protecting individuals against commercial and government entities collecting information. This software utilizes public key cryptography, which enables encrypted messages to be sent between two parties that exchange a public key to grant access to the encrypted information. PGP contributes to civil disobedience by enabling any Internet user to encrypt communications without requiring an intermediary group. Activists in various countries have used this tool to secure their computer-mediated conversations. Moreover, feminist

collectives across Latin America, Europe and the United States have conducted digital self-defense workshops that include training in PGP and Tor, aimed at women facing digital harassment, institutional violence or criminalization – especially abortion activists (Gender and Tech Resources, 2015).

Public consultations have also played a pivotal role in advancing citizen-driven digital rights frameworks. Brazil's 2014 Internet Framework (*Marco Civil*) established key principles such as neutrality and digital inclusion, shaped by input from activists, civil society and companies, and now serves as a foundation for future legislation. In Chile, the 2022 draft constitution – developed through public input – introduced protections for data privacy and freedom from algorithmic bias, reflecting a push for comprehensive digital rights. Although the draft was not approved, it underscored the public's role in advocating modern digital protections.

The deliberative strategy represents millions of developers, programmers and managers globally. Here, access to the common domain in the network environment means access to "common knowledge, common codes, common communication that [in turn] is essential for creativity and growth" (Hardt & Negri, 2009: 282) of a society characterized by co-creative ownership and cooperative production. Under these logics, hacking actions propose the collective generation and distribution of information. However, free cooperation must not neglect that the line between data production and consumption has been blurred by the alienation and commodification of personal data by "prosumers" (Fuchs, 2011). Thus, other strategies could complement this one.

2.3. Agonistic strategy

The agonistic strategy involves challenging powerful actors by promoting conflict that extends beyond the arena of communication and operates at a collective level. This strategy can complement the cooperative logic by tackling the structural level of politics on a larger scale through direct interventions. It is based on materialist and feminist approaches in which deliberative strategy ignores communicative "distortions" (and exclusions) resulting from coercion, instrumental-strategic action, social inequalities and technical limitations (Jane, 2017; McAfee & Howard, 2009). This perspective aims to highlight agonistic features and construct new interactions on the Internet. Agonistic notions highlight the antagonisms between agents and groups, redefining power asymmetries through digital tactics such as hacking. In other words, this perspective privileges the awareness and responses that emerge from struggle and resistance to coalesce civic agency groups in the multitude.

Within this strategy, scholars identify the role of "mass action hacktivism", as this "puts radical democracy at the center of their aspirations, whereas digitally correct hacktivism's deep concern for free, secure access to all information focuses them towards the infrastructure of information" (Jordan, 2007: 75). Furthermore, mass action hacktivism focuses on political

legitimacy, and is closely related to communities that support alt-globalization and global justice movements such as independent media watchers, ecologists groups, the *Indignados* movement or the *Movimento Passe Livre*, as well as platforms belonging to the European and World Social Forums (Schlembach, 2016).

Agonistic tactics include distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks, in which multiple computers – a multitude, say – attempt to disrupt the server's traffic. This action has been used to mitigate personal data misuse and counterbalance surveillance abuses. Unlike deliberative approaches focusing on protecting free and secure information, this tactic aims to disrupt the technological and data arena with more conflictive approaches. Internet activists have historically employed this type of procedure against governments that develop repressive policies or against companies that engage in questionable practices, often in support of specific social movements (Brooks et al., 2021). A prominent example of this agonistic approach is the series of DDoS attacks carried out by the hacktivist collective Anonymous in defense of WikiLeaks in 2010. After companies such as PayPal, Visa and MasterCard suspended services to WikiLeaks following the publication of classified US diplomatic cables, Anonymous launched Operation Payback (Addley & Halliday, 2010). This campaign used DDoS tactics to flood the websites of those companies with traffic, temporarily taking them offline. It explicitly mobilized digital multitudes to retaliate against corporate complicity in surveillance and censorship. Unlike deliberative strategies, this agonistic act did not aim to negotiate digital rights but to symbolically and materially disrupt the power infrastructures that threaten them (Coleman, 2015).

Another agonistic tactic is the role of whistleblowers who challenge the image and organization of corporations, institutions and even governments. The first famous digital leaks on national security issues affecting the US and Europe (such as Snowden and Manning in the WikiLeaks cables) resulted from a level of commitment against the indiscriminate use of information to sort and categorize people based on the collection of big data. Subsequently, the Cambridge Analytica case demonstrated how political processes can be influenced by data extractivism-based manipulation, with tangible consequences for the affected population. These cases proposed a basic premise for understanding resistance in the era of big data: controlling personal information is closely linked to democratic guarantees for autonomous citizen participation, both in its traditional forms and in cyberspace modes (Bauman et al., 2014).

Boycotts are also a long-standing tactic that social movements use to challenge disinformation and divisive content. In digital activism, campaigns such as Sleeping Giants encourage advertisers to withdraw support from far-right or fake news outlets. Similarly, the 2023 #StopFundingHate campaign urged companies to cease funding media platforms that spread polarizing content. Brands such as Lego and Vodafone responded by reevaluating their ad placements to align with values of social responsibility and inclusivity.

It is only possible to think of complete forms of accountability and transparency (such as making government agencies accountable to the public interest) with the struggles of those who expose activities in the "shadows" of high politics. Comprehending the social, political and economic dimensions of resistance must be fueled by informal strategies that expand the public sphere beyond legal rules and institutional boundaries.

2.4. Despairing strategy

Finally, the despairing strategy refers to a deeper logic of conflict that can aggregate collective change in material and structural dimensions. This means using tactics beyond the "necessary" agonistic confrontation, including protests and confrontations, to address higher levels of structural politics. It is given this name because despair has been negatively associated as an antidote to utopia and political change (Grain & Land, 2017). In contrast, we reclaim despair as the very engine of radical hope in moments of collapse – not as blind optimism but as a generative stance: it both acknowledges the depth of catastrophe and mobilizes the imaginative reworking of possibilities through sustained, affective engagement. In this context, multiple associations and groups promote a deeper conflict to engage against the sociopolitical order. This strategy can be awakened by anomy/altruism, similar to that identified by Durkheim (in Marks, 1974), whereby suicide can be committed by the isolated anomy and circumstances imposed against the individual or because individuals sacrifice themselves for a more significant cause to 'save' the social cohesion (the nation, the people, the group).

In this context, intense conflict can emerge as a result of individual anomy (loss of collective bounds) accelerated by behavioral monitoring and the instrumentarian power of surveillance (Zuboff, 2019), along with increasingly precarious living conditions – reflected in material instability and both the lack of expectations or the fulfillment of collective aspirations. In addition, individuals and groups may need to act as collective bodies promoting radical attempts at change.

At the individual level, despairing tactics are related to other strategies, such as deliberative and agonistic strategies. Yet, they go deeper into the sacrifice of their cause. Both Juliane Assange and Reality Winner, for example, initially employed agonistic tactics, but transitioned to a despairing strategy when they decided to take risks with their own lives and to face the consequences of their revelations. This is not to say that the multitude necessarily needs "heroes". Rather, the despairing strategy is more exceptional than the other strategies. In another example, in 2010, Aaron Swartz created a script using the free programming language Python for downloading academic articles hosted on JSTOR using a guest account at MIT. In the Guerrilla Open Access Manifesto, he called for civil disobedience to collectivize the world's knowledge. Swartz was arrested and charged with computer fraud and copyright offences. This case can be considered a combination of deliberative

ideas (free access to information) with a deeper commitment to challenging the sociopolitical order that ended in his suicide (Da Silveira, 2013).

At the collective level, tactics of despair include riots, unrest, massive protests and even the use of violence, combining digital infrastructure and offline responses. This means that even in an interconnected world, mass action hacktivism and other strategies would need to coalesce multitudes in the offline dimension to grasp the structural scale of politics. Collectively, these tactics are produced specifically at moments of discontent and critical situations of effervescence and turmoil. Nevertheless, they can also be triggered by concrete events, such as the financial crisis of 2008, and by key individuals, such as the death of George Floyd in the wave of the Black Lives Matter movement (Cappelli, 2020).

In those cases, even violence can be committed. Still, the events should be carefully interpreted in terms of objects (properties, life, immaterial values), purposes (concrete claims, diffuse orientation), timing (progressive or eruptive) and spatial scale (from local regions to the international level). All the same, the use of violence as a legitimate source of resistance is a controversial point, since it could raise the problem of abject and illegitimate results. Paradoxically, from a historical perspective, peaceful and incremental politics have reached moments of turmoil, as they have been limited in promoting material and social transformations.

In riots and uprisings such as the Catalan secession, the Hong Kong protests or the racial protests in the US and Nigeria, technology has been both a means and a target of contestation. However, these cases all go beyond the logic of resistance to surveillance as a technological dimension limited to the monitoring of users. Despite varying results and setbacks, these events have brought together the strategies described. They brought up substantial changes in the dynamics of confrontation and conflict from multitudes that did not conform to their social realities (Burgos, 2016). This does not mean that all the protests were caused by despair, but this logic enabled people to react and mobilize. For instance, "We left Facebook" was the slogan of many young people who transferred their criticism of the Internet onto the streets during marches in Turkey and Brazil (Mendonça et al., 2019).

In many despairing events, surveillance is not directly challenged. Yet, surveillance can be challenged indirectly. Hardly anyone took to the streets to protest against big tech algorithms, and few people advocated for strikes to improve data protection rules. However, when the multitude did mobilize, they combined tactics to challenge surveillance by merging transversal grievances that affect this domain, such as social justice, transparent governance and human dignity.

3. Discussion and conclusions

Resistance is versatile, adaptive and mutable. Thus, analyzing its logic is challenging and not definitive (Holloway, 2005). Instead of mapping actors, and

the sites of resistance and wider political arena in which they operate, we propose a model to interpret strategies and tactics in order to identify their movements and impacts (Figure 2). This model transitions from individual and collective reasoning around democratic values to a desperate plea for a new social order. As many actors combine different tactics and change their roles whenever necessary, the Figure 2 should be read dynamically rather than as a static picture.

Figure 2. Interdependence between resistance strategies
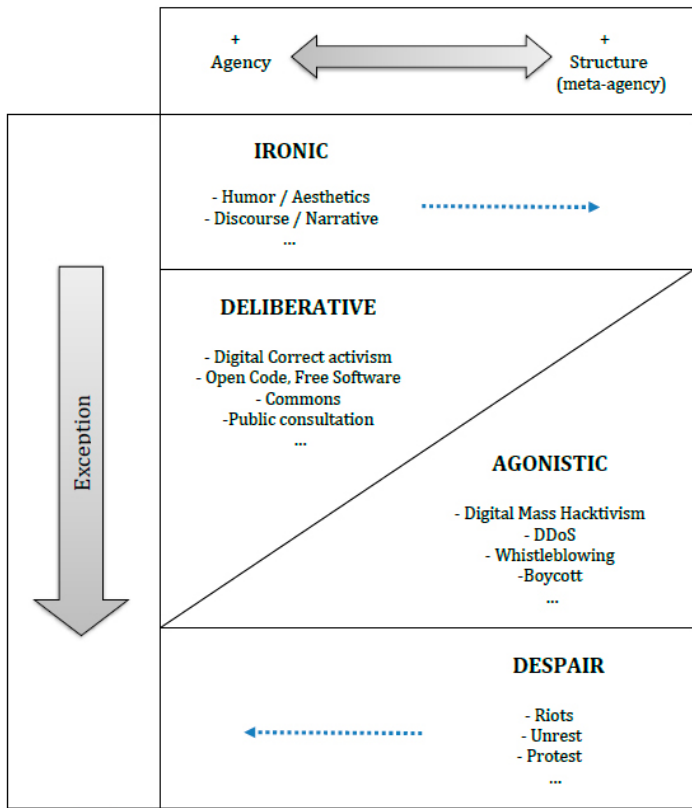
Source: Authors' elaboration.

Each tactic in each of the strategies can be expanded as the multitude re-appropriates or incorporates further ones. There is no strict hierarchy between the strategies in our model. Furthermore, the strategies can be combined to promote social transformation, as most of them are interdependent. However, two scales are represented here, on the left and across the top. The scale on the left indicates that, as we move downwards, there is an increase in the degree of exceptionality: the amount of unease and political level that

sustains non-conformity with "normal" situations, encouraging the multitude to challenge surveillance and the surveyors to generate "new" politics. Exceptionality indicates a growing perception of "critical junctures", in McChesney's terms (2007). In short, the degree of exceptionality indicates resistance reactions and the generation of change, providing lines of escape (emancipation forms) against the 'edges of capture' (forms of domination). The scale of exceptionality increases as we move to tactics of despair, in which non-conformity and frustration among the multitude are translated into direct conflict and open challenge towards the sociopolitical order, not just challenging surveillance, but demanding structural transformation. The scale across the top of the table shows that resistance strategies operate on or specialize in the two social levels mentioned above: the agency level and the structural level.

Ironic and deliberative strategies tend to focus on the agency (actor) level, as they focus on communication and cooperation. In contrast, the agonistic and despairing strategies tend to challenge the structural (macro-political) level, as they focus on conflict and direct unrest to disrupt the sociopolitical order. For example, with the ironic strategy, language involves resistance, especially at the agency levels, because no regime has been overthrown just by humor. Nevertheless, ironic tactics can be extended to complement and even create new tactics in other strategies. Language helps to rethink the structure. In this sense, the Canadian writer Daphne Marlatt and many other feminist writers question the relationship between autobiographical paradigms: "Who has the right to speak? Who has language available to them? Who is privileged by existing linguistic conventions? (Who is not made marginal?)" (Marlatt, in New, 2003: 248). These questions are not limited to the arena of communication, but also open up lines of resistance in order to rethink communication throughout the entire social structure.

At the same time, the despairing strategy relies on the agency level (specific actors) and other strategies to unify and mobilize multitudes. Thus, in contrast to ironic and deliberative tactics, agonistic tactics and especially despair tactics should expand their logic to reconnect with the agency level (including communication) in order to obtain support and reach deeper social transformations in the structure.

The interdependence between the four strategies and their positions on the agency-structural scale also indicates that ironic and deliberative tactics must create "equivalences" and produce broad meanings – empty signifiers, to use Laclau's terms (2005) – to reach a wider range of audiences and structural levels. Meanwhile, despairing and agonistic tactics would need to granulate their content to reach specific actors at the agency level, increasing the capillarity of discourses and actions (see dotted arrows in the figure).

Thus, the model demonstrates an organic and ecological sense of interdependence, rather than isolated strategies. Strategies are intertwined with one another at different moments in history. Yet, different experiences and contexts would emphasize certain strategies over others. However, when the four

strategies are maximized at a given moment, the conditions for a "perfect" resistance situation are created. In this case, the strategies can support each other in terms of temporality (they last longer) or intensity (they erupt on a greater scale of mobilization).

In the "perfect" situation for resistance, all strategies mutually reinforce and foster structural transformations in the form of uprisings, revolts, rebellions and even the beginnings of revolutions (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2003: 30). Naturally, these events are not always the goal of the multitude's strategies, as many tactics may fade away or support only reformative change. Furthermore, it is beyond our scope to explore the critical elements, conditions and specific moments when these ideal situations interact to produce higher structural changes. However, agency strategies and structural calculations "are not outside of the mechanisms of transgressive contention but are the raw material for their action and interaction" (McAdam et al., 2003: 226).

On the other hand, for hegemonic actors at the structural level, the "perfect" situation of resistance would indicate the "perfect storm." They would aim to avoid higher levels of tolerable exceptionality and the conjunction of different strategies. State figures and even large corporations have used counter-narratives and disinformation throughout history to counter adversaries or protect their position (Bjola & Pamment, 2018). In this way, the ironic form of resistance is a vital field of struggle, as inaccurate information or dubious narratives could produce the effect of disorientation and delegitimization of information sources.

These effects even create the conditions to reinforce authority and allow counter-resistance actors to target the multitude's tactics. Indeed, warfare tactics brought into the civilian sphere of digital communication have been behind recent political campaigns, coopting despair tactics from the multitude to reinforce the traditional authority of messianic leaders (Hameleers & Schmuck, 2017).

Furthermore, with surveillance, watchers can concentrate on a specific type of strategy to avoid the ideal conjunction for the "perfect storm". For instance, the despair strategy, closely related to possible impacts at the structural level, is often the one that is most suppressed and targeted by official surveillance and other counter-resistance actors. This could be not only because the despair strategy is sometimes labelled by its opponents as illegal, violent and even chaotic, but also because it presents an approach to conflict that would demand and justify strong responses. However, suppressing these strategies, either by authoritarian tendencies or disproportionate responses, can restart the cycle of resistance strategies that challenge the sociopolitical order through their diverse tactics.

Indeed, the tension between resistance and counter-resistance involves a complex interaction in surveillance and beyond. In terms of actors, there are not just two permanent sides of the divide – one advocating surveillance and the other resisting it – in a perpetual cycle of action and reaction. The above strategies and their effects are also contingent, but they are always open to

continuous reformulation. Yet, their combination and interdependence at certain historical moments could lead to deep changes in many sociopolitical orders. Like organic or ecological environments, which are transformed by both small steps and giant leaps, these four strategies converge at specific moments and exhibit a critical interdependence that promotes significant changes in the structural ecosystem of politics.

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