



The struggles for the right to the city across spatial scales: Experiences from Grand Belleville in Paris

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Abstract

This article examines the diffusion process of social movements, placing emphasis on their geographical dimensions. It focuses on the influence of the anti-austerity mobilization Nuit Debout on local urban collectives in Grand Belleville. Building on a three-year participant observation within the collective Droit à la Belle-Ville in which the authors are involved as activists, the article provides two results. First, it shows that diffusion is a context-dependent process. Anti-austerity mobilization had a particular resonance in Grand Belleville because of place-based political history and previously existing activist networks. Some collectives, such as Droit à la Belle-Ville, act as transmitters because they frame their action on both local and global scales. Second, practices and ideological frameworks move from global to local arenas according to the way local collectives re-contextualize them and define their scale of action. Overall, the study sheds new light on the aftermath of large anti-austerity mobilizations and enhances our knowledge of the contemporary local urban activism struggling for the right to the city.

Keywords

Diffusion, space, scale, right to the city, Paris

Introduction

Since the 2008 economic crisis, there has been a proliferation of grassroots movements in large cities throughout Europe, the United-States and North Africa. In general, the

literature on these mobilizations has focused on their social bases and organization (della Porta, 2015). Mobilizations such as the 15-M in Madrid and Barcelona (2011), Occupy Wall Street in New-York (2011) or Nuit Debout in Paris (2016) have been characterized by the occupation of squares in city centers to protest against austerity policies and their consequences (Pickerill & Krinsky, 2012). Although their connections to previous global protests have been demonstrated (della Porta & Mattoni, 2014), scholars often portray this 'movement of the squares' as a new type of urban mobilization regarding its territorial identity, the claims against global neoliberalization, its horizontal practices and the birth of a hybrid political culture termed 'citizenism' (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 7). However, we know little about the spread of such practices and ideological frames to subsequent protests at lower scales. In this article, we hope to contribute to filling this gap by examining where and how they have spread into local struggles, focusing on urban local activist groups. Why have anti-austerity movements been influential where they have? Second, how have anti-austerity strategies and ideological frameworks moved and been re-contextualized locally?

Throughout these questions, our first goal is to specify the conditions that foster social movement diffusion in some places rather than in others. Second, we examine how global protest might reshape the scope of local activist groups' actions. Following recent research (Dufour, 2016), we emphasize the geographical dimensions of appropriation, looking at the way local activism develops after global protest in relation to the socio-spatial and political context in which it is embedded. The research is based on participant observation carried out in the collective *Droit à la Belle-Ville* (DALBV) from 2015 to 2018 in Paris, in which we were involved initially without any research-oriented objective. We analyze its activities and tactics, the use of spaces and places, the deploying of actions at different scales. Reflecting on the spatial dimension of diffusion and appropriation, the case of urban activism is particularly relevant because it takes various dimensions of space (scale, place, networks) as both a means and object of protest. Moreover, if the resistance to the neoliberal urban fabric is an important topic (Domaradzka, 2018), we aim at casting more light on the contemporary evolution of the right-to-the-city claim looking at its connection with anti-austerity mobilization. The findings show that the tactics and ideological frameworks of anti-austerity protest has a substantial resonance in the neighborhood of Grand Belleville (Paris), because of the political history of this place, the current density of activism and the ongoing, albeit limited because contested, gentrification process. Throughout the analysis of the appropriation process, we show that DALBV has modified its relation to place and to the geography of its actions against gentrification and segregation, through a process of contextualization of the practices generated in *Nuit Debout*.

The paper is organized as follows. First, we situate our analysis within the literature that addresses the diffusion process. We sustain that the agency and contingency of diffusion (Soule, 2006) call into question the spatial conditions which generate it. After a presentation of data and methods, we analyze three factors that explain why anti-austerity strategies had spread within housing activism in Grand Belleville. Then, we explore how members of DALBV joined larger mobilization and got 'back to the neighborhood'. We examine these interactions focusing on the modification of organizational, tactical and ideological aspects

of the local struggle, as well as its adaptation to the contingent characteristics of the Grand Belleville neighborhood. The study of diffusion process opens new routes for the study of the local activism struggling for the right to the city that we address in the conclusion.

1. The diffusion and appropriation of social movements across places and scales

Throughout the analysis of the diffusion process, defined as the flow of tactics and ideological frameworks, scholars have demonstrated that social movements are not bounded entities that would come out from nowhere. Rather, they influence each other through what Meyer and Whittier (1994) have identified as spillover effects. According to Tarrow (1998), a movement starts in a context of political opportunity and develops in several mobilizations throughout a cycle of protests. This period of increased contention is likely to inaugurate the spread of several items: organization, tactics, ideological frames and collective identities. Initial mobilization may generate new protests (spinoff movements) by fostering political opportunity structures or by legitimizing causes and struggles (McAdam, 1995). The diffusion process depends on three conditions. First, the contact between transmitters and adopters. Transmitters are groups or organizations that bring tactics and resources to adopters. The latter are activist networks that recognize transmitters as legitimate and necessary for their struggles. Second, the construction of similarity (McAdam & Rucht, 1993): adopters generate claims and identity of themselves compatible to those of transmitters. Both types of actors then share an interest in transmission. Third, diffusion works out through several channels. Whittier (2013) has identified four routes of influence: politicization, creation of direct or non-relational networks, enlargement of social movement dynamics, and changing political and cultural contexts. As far as non-relational channels are concerned, Zamponi & Daphi (2014) have argued that collective memory of past protests is also a key mechanism to understand how activists interpret current issues and conceive mobilization. Lastly, McAdam et al. (2001) suggest distinguishing between diffusion, which refers to the transfer between activists previously positioned in shared networks, and brokerage, defined as the new relationships between activists, which were not previously connected. Brokers are facilitators of diffusion of knowledge and tactics.

Diffusion is not a linear process of translation that would occur automatically (Snow & Benford, 1999). It depends on political contexts, as well as on the resources and links between activist groups. Then, diffusion is a process of transmission and reception, of adoption and adaptation, which mechanisms have to be empirically addressed (Soule, 2006). In this respect, recent scholarship has emphasized the geographical dimensions of the diffusion process, starting from the observation that the spread of ideas and tactics does not occur everywhere. Andrew & Biggs (2006) show that the diffusion of information about the sit-in movement only made sense in some places according to their political context and to the density of movement organizations. At a transnational level, della Porta & Mattoni (2014) also observe that the post-2010 anti-austerity protests had not spread in all urban settings. Accordingly, they call for a deeper analysis of the geography of diffusion, or 'selective diffusion' (p. 278). Works on the diffusion of the World Social Forum (Smith & Smythe,

2010) have identified two factors to explain the uneven global to local spatial pattern of diffusion: first, the direct support of the WSF for only some of the local social forums and second, the process through which activists brought back to their localities the knowledge they accumulated at larger scales. Hence, the success of diffusion is context-dependent.

The study by Dufour (2016) goes a step further. While acknowledging the importance of pre-existing networks, political opportunity structures and of the actions of initiators to understand the spatial patterns of protest spread, the author shows that the modalities of diffusion vary from one place to another. She explains this variability through the geographical appropriation process. It refers to the reinterpretation and the re-contextualization of global protest by local actors, and the scale at which they subsequently organize their actions. The scale of action will vary according to several contextual factors: past struggles, place-based history, organization of central power and its relationships with activism.

These results about contingency and agency of the diffusion process echo important debates within works using a geographical approach in the reading of contentious politics. Central to this approach is that space is not the mere background of political struggles, but that it is crucial for the creation of politicized groups (Martin & Miller, 2003). Space is perceived and used, at different scales, as a mean by activists, and engenders spatial agency of social movements (Ripoll, 2005; Sewell, 2001). As Miller & Nicholls argue (2013, p. 465), collective actions have different relationships to space: territorial (claiming space), place-based (geographically bounded), network (weak ties between territories). Another key point is that local actions are of great importance for global protests. Cities would facilitate the building of networks between local activist groups and the collectivization of place-based resources, which may result in political convergence (Miller & Nicholls, 2013; Uitermark et al. 2012). The connection of local struggles can foster mass mobilization (Arampatzi & Nicholls, 2012), or increase the commitment level of activists to larger movements (Diani, 2004). In their comparison of Los Angeles and Amsterdam, Uitermark & Nicholls (2012) showed that the sustainability of Occupy protests actually depended on their links with local activist networks with experiences and dispositions.

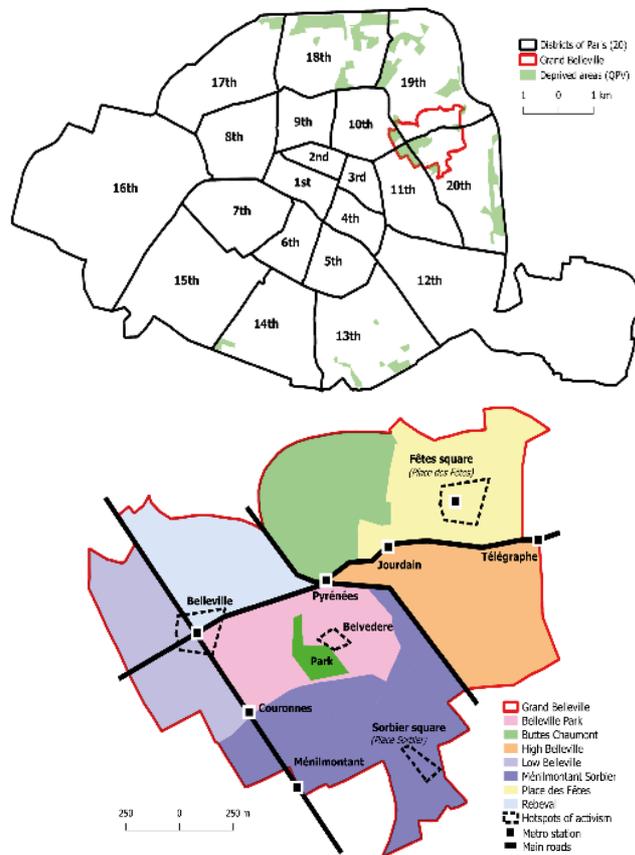
Drawing on this line of inquiry, we propose to analyze the diffusion process from anti-austerity mobilization to local urban activism, focusing on its geographical dimensions. In this respect, our article first deals with the spatial conditions that make the diffusion process feasible and sustainable, and then turns onto the analysis of the local appropriation paths. Scholars have demonstrated that anti-austerity mobilizations draw on references to previous social mobilizations (della Porta & Mattoni, 2014; Kokoreff, 2016), but they have been less interested in their consequences after the dismantling of occupation sites. We propose to examine the enduring influence of these global protests at the local scale. Our hope is first to contribute to the study of the diffusion process and how it works out in practice across place and scale. We focus on local urban movements, because even if their struggles address local issues, their protests represent a broader challenge to the neoliberal fabric of the city. They also directly conceive their action in relation to space, both as an object and a means.

Second, we aim at casting more light on the organization of urban activism, in light of its connection to anti-austerity mobilization at broader scales.

2. Site and methodology

The analysis draws on a research carried out within the collective Droit à la Belle-Ville (DALBV) between 2015 and 2018. DALBV is an interesting case to analyze the spatial dimension of diffusion. Its nine members were directly involved in Nuit Debout (2016) and contributed to putting forward urban issues there. Moreover, since its creation, DALBV has explicitly framed its actions as an opposition to the capitalist logic of urban development (speculation, gentrification, commodification), linking the local scale of actions to the struggle against global forces of urbanization. The physical location of DALBV is in Grand Belleville (Figure 1). It is also where the collective realizes its actions. This area does not correspond to any official administrative territory. Rather, DALBV has defined it according to the practices and representations of activists and residents compiled during three sessions of collaborative mapping. Then, Grand Belleville falls in the category of ‘lived space’ - the space appropriated by citizens (Lefebvre, 1991). With the same methodology, we identify seven sub-neighborhoods: Belleville Park, Buttes Chaumont, High Belleville, Low Belleville, Ménilmontant-Sorbier, Place des Fêtes, and Rebeval. Militant activities concentrate in four hotspots: Belleville subway station, Fêtes square (Place des Fêtes), Sorbier square (Place Sorbier) and Belvedere at the top of Belleville park.

Figure 1
 Localization and composition of Grand Belleville neighborhood in Paris
 Source: Authors



The data on DALBV comes from participant observation. It refers to the data collection method in which the researcher gets involved in the activities of the organization under study. Although participant observation is not the most common method in social movement studies, it has proven to be very useful (Balsiger & Lambelet, 2014; Plows, 2008) and it may be particularly suited for the study of diffusion and appropriation process. Three core aspects define this method: collecting grassroots data from the field, doing a micro-level research to grasp the rationales and meaning of activist practices, and experiencing directly the group through participation. Participant observation thus requires that the researcher get involved within a group during an extended period of time.

We initiated the creation of DALBV and we are still highly involved in it. Our participation consists in the organization and commitment in meetings and demonstrations in Grand Belleville as well as writing articles for the quarterly newspaper. We initially got involved as activists without any research-oriented objectives. Hence, we did not face particular difficulties to access the collective and to establish trusted relationships with the other members. It is only since September 2017 that we have collected data in a more systematic way, using field notes, oral recordings, photos, maps and films, because DALBV was getting involved in more activities and has joined a structure called La Fabrik Cooperative where it has an office, access to meeting rooms and direct contact with other associations working there.

Participant observation has several advantages. It enables us to study the construction of the ideological frames and tactics before and after activist actions, which is useful to understand how diffusion works out. Moreover, participant observation allows us to compile data about the social and spatial logics that shape activist practices. Nonetheless, participant observation has two main drawbacks. The first is about the conditions of data collection: our presence is likely to have influenced the attitudes of the individuals and there is a share of subjectivity in our interpretations. To control these bias, we decided to inform other activists of our academic project only during the submission process of this article. Neither were they involved in the writing of this paper. Our covert research position might also raise ethical pitfalls because the people being studied were not informed, but we did so to reach more detailed and contextualized findings. Moreover, the data collection took place in a context of stabilization of the relations within the collective, as DALBV had been recently created. It might have been complicated to add a research dimension to this already complex task. The second methodological issues traditionally discussed is the small number of case studied. However, as Small (2009) argues, despite the lack of representativeness, much can be learnt from an in-depth exploration of a unique case. In addition, even if we focus on DALBV, our position as activists provides us with frequent contacts with many local organizations. Apart from DALBV, seven local collectives compose our sample: Pyrenees Refectory, Belleville Convergence, Popular assembly of Ménéilmontant-Sorbier, Place des Fêtes Collective, The High Belleville, Air House, Citizen Belleville. Their fields of struggle are diverse – housing, culture, commerce, legal aid – but they all connect around two key priorities: to prevent the displacement of low-income households, and to value their local identity. Aside from local collectives, we also gathered information from a larger organization involved in urban

struggles, the national movement *Droit Au Logement*, with whom we recently have collaborated. Lastly, we complemented participant observation by documentary sources about Belleville and data from the French census (2015). Access to localized data from the census is not restricted. We use them to describe the social and urban features of Grand Belleville.

3. Why has the movement spread there? Activist place and local mobilizations in Grand Belleville

Three factors have played a role in the diffusion process from global mobilization to urban local movements in Grand Belleville. First, this neighborhood is a key activist place. Second, and based on this contextual situation, strong local networks of activists have emerged in 2015 just before *Nuit Debout* (2016), and DALBV played a key role in bringing together collectives around the opposition to urban neoliberalism. Third, local activists participated in *Nuit Debout*, accumulated experiences, and brought back to the neighborhood tactics and ideological frames. Here, DALBV acted as transmitter from the global to the local scale.

3.1 Grand Belleville as a key activist place

Grand Belleville stands as a key activist place, thanks to the resources it provides to local organizations, as well as to the norms and values that define the social relations and the daily practices there. Grand Belleville is also broadly recognized as an activist place in the larger Parisian context. Its identity is based on a long history of resistance to the urban interventions led by the State and the housing market stakeholders. Five historical periods can account for the current density of activist networks and explain why anti-austerity protests had a great resonance there. The first period dates back to the Commune of Paris in 1871. The headquarters of the opponents to the urban transformations initiated by Baron Haussmann was located in Grand Belleville and the repression was particularly severe (Harvey, 2012). It contributed to foster the identity of a rebel, marginalized and underclass neighborhood. The second period occurred in the ‘Glorious Thirty’ (1945s-1970s). Many insalubrious buildings were demolished in Grand Belleville as well as in other working-class areas (Coing, 1966) before large public housing estate were erected. These interventions also led to the destruction of the social structures and the emergence of new socio-spatial divisions. The third period occurred during the 1970s and was characterized by a large squatting movement led by alternative artistic groups and homeless people, in which the consumption and traffics of drugs were widespread. It contributed to the stigmatization of Belleville as a deteriorated and somehow dangerous area. The fourth period begins in the 1990s while the neighborhood went through its second urban renovation. Precarious artists and activists, gathered in the *Collective La Bellevilleuse* (1989), managed to stop the displacement of precarious families and the construction of a large shopping center (1996).

The last and current period, which started in the late 1990s, is characterized by gentrification dynamics, which combine the interventions of real-estate markets developers

and the installation of upper classes (for a full discussion of the causes of gentrification, see Hamnett, 1991). As far as the dynamics on the local housing market are concerned, rents have risen by 60% and prices by 65% over the past ten years. The share of white-collar workers has also recorded a significant increase since the beginning of the 1990s, going from 17 up to 31% in 2015. Moreover, the recent development of Airbnb is indicative of a new tourist interest for this neighborhood. Some of the new real estate projects promote Belleville as the heart of the former working-class area of Paris, new leisure and consumption activities for upper-middle classes are being erected on vacant plots, and retail shops run by young creators contribute to changing the image of the district. Speculation, rising housing prices and the broader affordability constraints in Paris also explain why Grand Belleville has become a desirable place for upper-middle class newcomers. However, the gentrification process in Grand Belleville is far from being completed, precisely due to the density of contemporary urban resistances (Bollache, 2017; Clerval, 2013; Chanca, 2016). In fact, the neighborhood is still providing low-income households with several resources and opportunities. It is mainly linked to its residential fabric, because low-income households find affordable housing in the large public housing stock (Table 1), or in deteriorated furnished hotels managed by slumlords. Consequently, blue-collar workers, employees and unemployed people represent 45% of the population (33% in Paris), while a quarter of the population lives under the poverty line. The proportion of immigrants is also high (between 17 and 33% of the total population). Grand Belleville has long been a place of installation of non-European immigrants: Sub-Saharan African, North-African, Chinese, Latino. The numerous detail and ethnic shops are places of exchange and sociability (Clerval et al., 2011; Simon, 1995). The emergence and the structuration of the contemporary housing activism in Grand Belleville is linked to these characteristics of the neighborhood: long place-based history of resistance against urban projects, its working-class and immigrant identity and the dynamics of gentrification.

Table 1

Socio-urban characteristics of Grand Belleville.

Source: French Census (2015) and Notarial dataset
(www.immobilier.notaires.fr, accessed on November 2018)

	Paris	Grand Belleville	Belleville Park	Buttes Chaumont	High Belleville	Low Belleville	Ménil. Sorbier	Fêtes Square	Rebeval
Population									
Residents	2,203,206	109,446	15,289	12,631	17,406	14,468	23,268	14,840	11,544
Pop. density	20,903	50,529	48,382	44,071	43,624	56,648	45,857	47,351	42,978
Immigrants (%)	20	25	30	17	20	31	25	22	28
Residential and social profile (%)									
Social housing	18	28	44	16	25	18	39	35	11
Mean price (€/m ²)	9,470	8,100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Poverty	15	24	33	14	22	31	25	21	24
White-collar wk.	41	31	21	39	31	32	28	29	38
Middle classes	20	22	22	24	24	21	23	21	21
Blue-collar wk.	22	28	35	18	27	28	28	32	28
Unemployment	12	17	19	15	15	15	17	14	11
Annual median income	29,900	20,230	16,066	25,811	21,790	16,412	19,530	20,146	21,840

3.2 The coordination of local resistances in Grand Belleville (2014-2015)

In addition to the acuity of urban issues in Grand Belleville, local collectives had set two propitious conditions for the diffusion process to happen there: local political resources and networks between activist groups.

The cycle of mobilization in Grand Belleville that preceded *Nuit Debout* has resulted in the creation of the Coordination of Resistances and Initiatives in the city (CRI). This entity gathered several local collectives and associations. Two processes have played a role in the creation of the CRI. First, a tense political context characterized by several evictions of squats, cultural centers and associations, resulting in tough political relations with public institutions. In 2014, among the wave of evictions, it is worth mentioning the displacement of The Pyrenees Refectory (*Cantine des Pyrénées*), an association that provides free lunches and legal aid every day, before it found another place to settle in 2016. The Local Mirror Industry (*La Miroiterie*), a squat which promoted punk and alternative culture, and the Ermitage Villa (*Villa de l'Ermitage*), a squat of African musicians was also evicted. In 2015, the municipality and the State attempted to evict the refugees from the high school they were occupying. The solidarity of neighbors prevented their displacement. Nevertheless, the process of eviction culminated in June 2015 when a tough anti-occupation law was passed. Illegal occupation, which had been a significant tool to resist the market logics in Grand Belleville, became more difficult.

Following the wave of evictions, several encounters were organized. The talks focused on the way the inhabitants and activists could organize to resist. In 2015, the association Trajectories (*Trajectoires*), which provides help to migrants, organized meetings about unequal urban transformations ('Belleville bobo or not bobo?', on 12 April; 'Silence, eviction is on the go. Belleville, for whom?', on 13 September). The founding moment of this cycle of protests dates back to 23 October 2015, when the association Trajectories and the Collective Ramponeau organized a debate called 'Belleville not without us' to address the lack of participation in the decision-making process of urban projects. The discussion focused on the resistance led by the Collective Ramponeau against the construction of a tourist hotel, seen as a clear attempt to advance the gentrification process. Eight of the collectives that participated in this meeting joined the CRI afterwards. Two of them were fighting against the establishment of a large supermarket (Collective *Stop Monop* and Collective *Stop Carrefour*). Two others were struggling for solidarity projects (childcare, food distribution). The collectives *Denoyez* and *Villa Ermitage* addressed cultural issues. The collective *Belleville-Tourtille* was fighting against a real-estate project and calling for more public housing. In this context, DALBV emerged as a collective of resistance and urban popular education for the Right to the city in Grand Belleville, to find alternatives to gentrification, against speculation, expensive rents, evictions and tourist rental platforms.

Over a few weeks, the coordination of struggles in Grand Belleville reached a significant audience, because each collective had already generated its own mobilizations and networks. The coordination aimed at supporting the local struggles within which each activist group was involved. It allows activists to understand their contribution to the struggle against the logics of the neoliberal cities and their local consequences in Grand Belleville. It was decided that the best way to achieve results in the short term would be through collective direct

action. Accordingly, a local demonstration was organized, on 19 March 2016, so as to commemorate the Commune in 1871. The preparation of the demonstration has been an intense learning process for the local collectives. Its purpose was presented as follows:

“We are all mobilized to set the basis for another development of the city and against projects imposed from above. As collectives and associations of Grand Belleville, we will take the streets on the day after the anniversary of the Commune of Paris. This first public action will combine a demonstration and an exploratory walk. Our goal is to bring the inhabitants together to share knowledge about the past and current local struggles, as well as to make proposals for the city we want. This action will show to those who sell the city that local population is able get together, to organize and that their initiatives valorize the urban and social fabric of the neighborhood. Housing, culture, education, local shops, solidarity... nothing that makes our daily life, nothing that threatens the soul of our neighborhood must remain outside of our resistance and initiatives.” (CRI, 2016)

About two hundred people participated in the demonstration. The main originality was that participants made stops in the places where past or current urban struggles were taking place. The demonstration brought out common demands for more justice and democracy in Belleville, and evidenced the capacity of several groups to coordinate their action and create solidarity. This demonstration also symbolized a change of the scale of action in the neighborhood: isolated collectives converged to make common claims and actions at the scale of Grand Belleville. Based on this political configuration structured around a new coalition and new scales of action, the local collectives of Belleville were about to join in the larger anti-austerity mobilization *Nuit Debout*.

3.3 From local arenas to the big pond. Local collectives in *Nuit Debout* (2016)

A few days after the CRI demonstration, France entered a massive moment of protests and strikes against the Labor Law (*Loi Travail*), a package of liberal reforms that were intended to lower the social protection of workers and to increase flexibility on the labor market. It resulted in the *Nuit Debout* moment, characterized by the occupation of one of the main square in Paris (Republic Square), close to Grand Belleville. During the occupation, a small society was built in which one could find a nursery, free food, as well as a media center in charge of communication on social networks (a newspaper, a radio and a television channel). As the size of the occupation was increasing, other services established such as a library, an area for children, and different workshops to prepare demonstrations. These infrastructures allowed a degree of independence and autonomy from traditional and national trade unions.

All the collectives that belong to the CRI coalition did not directly join the *Nuit Debout* movement. Some of them conceived that their action had to remain focused on Grand Belleville and they would not move to other places. On the contrary, DALBV participated in *Nuit Debout*. For DALBV, even if the CRI was locally anchored and linked to a territory, the field of struggle (i.e. urban neoliberalism and inequalities) was larger. In this politically opportune moment, DALBV started to conceive its action both in terms of territory (Grand

Belleville) but also in terms of urban issues, which goes far beyond the Grand Belleville boundaries.

Figure 2

The journal of DALBV exposed in Republic Square during Nuit Debout (2016)

Source: Authors



In Nuit Debout, DALBV became the main collective around which the activists of the CRI coalition gathered. Importantly, DALBV learnt and adopted the practices of other committees in Republic Square. It organized a popular assembly on urban struggles (17 April 2016). It also installed a permanent kiosk to spread its newspaper and to stimulate exchanges with other participants. For its members, it has a twofold impact. On the one hand, it accelerated the constitution of the collective, the definition of its strategies and ideas that had only been created one year before. On the other hand, DALBV strengthened its contacts with large-scale organization struggling against housing inequalities, and especially with the Right to the Housing association (DAL). Then, the collective acquired an increased visibility in the local and global arenas of protest, and a new legitimacy regarding the struggle for the right to the city.

Hence, Grand Belleville has been a fertile ground for large-scale anti-austerity protest tactics and ideological frames to spread for three reasons. First, contextual factors linked to the political history of the neighborhood and the current gentrification process in Grand Belleville set the basis for urban resistances. Second, the efforts made to build convergence between the local struggles in Grand Belleville, which culminated with the creation of the CRI coalition, have strengthened the local activist networks and changed their scale of action from isolated struggles to a broader involvement for Grand Belleville. Lastly, the political opportunity structure of Nuit Debout has accelerated the organization of some of the local collectives, increasing their legitimacy and their relationships with larger-scale organizations. In particular, DALBV had a key role in the process of diffusion after the experience accumulated in Nuit Debout, as we shall examine in the next section.

4. The appropriation of larger protest repertoire and ideas at the local scale

4.1 Politicization and learning process during Nuit Debout

Nuit Debout, like other anti-austerity protests that have emerged since the 2010s, has three key features that inaugurate ‘the rise of a new global protest culture’ (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 11). First, the mobilization is characterized by the occupation of public spaces and the erection of camps in one of the main squares of Paris. The occupation of the square was a period of political experimentation of a new way to use urban spaces, which contrasts with the urban privatization dynamics. Occupation has created new spaces of interaction between inhabitants that would have barely met otherwise: precarious young people, migrants, workers, unionists. Occupation works as a space for confidence and empathy that are hard to find in the contemporary city. Second, it inaugurated a convergence of different political traditions. In the French case, the Labor Law (*Loi Travail*) was the triggering factor of social mobilization. However, the originality of this Nuit Debout moment lies in the convergence of several fields of struggle around a common opposition to neoliberalism and social inequalities. As a result, economic, environmental but also feminist struggles were at the forefront of Nuit Debout. Thirdly, Nuit Debout relied on new practices around popular assemblies that put forward consensus and horizontality. It worked as a laboratory of self-organization and democracy.

From this perspective, the months spent in Nuit Debout represented a moment of intense activist self-education, and allowed the construction of networks and contacts for DALBV. The members of our collective lived this moment fully and went through a significant learning process. We were all the more receptive to this moment as our collective had only been created one year before, and was still looking for its stabilized identity and modes of action. In spite of the approval of the Labor Law, the legacy of the movement is going far beyond the opposition to the labor market reforms. How have the constitutive elements of Nuit Debout spread from Republic square to Grand Belleville? What has been the role of DALBV?

4.2 Back to the neighborhood. The local struggles after global protest

After the mobilization of 2016, a new repertoire of actions, as well as new resources, spread to the local field of struggle in Grand Belleville. We may distinguish between two aspects of the appropriation process. First, a direct translation of practices that were at the core of Nuit Debout mobilization. Second, the creation of a new resistance strategy. Both dimensions rely on new scales of action that link local issues to the global dimensions of urban struggle. It also inaugurates a new use of space in the neighborhood. In this process, DALBV acted as a broker (McAdam et al. 2001), because it played a key role of transmitter from the global to the local scale. We shall detail empirical cases of both dimension of the appropriation process, focusing on the actions carried out by DALBV.

Regarding the spread of activist practices, one item has translated from Nuit Debout to Grand Belleville: the popular assemblies. Only three weeks after the beginning of Nuit Debout, in April 2016, local assemblies spread out in Grand Belleville, thus reproducing the

modes of participation experienced in Nuit Debout. Three assemblies were created: Place des Fêtes, Ménilmontant-Sorbier and Belvedere of Belleville, which we were in charge of (see Figure 1). Those assemblies allowed local struggles to organize and to connect with the bigger protest against the Labor Law (*Loi Travail*) and economic inequalities. The assemblies fostered an extension of the protest at different scales: the struggle against the Labor Law at a national level and the struggle against gentrification and inequalities in the neighborhood (Pulgar, 2017). Once the occupation of Republic Square ended in June 2016, these meetings continued until October 2016. They contributed to creating local networks between neighbors, to strengthening the coordination between the different parts of the neighborhood, and to reactivating some of the links previously constructed in the CRI coalition. More broadly, it shows the centrifugal force of the 2016 cycle of mobilization. The implementation of local popular assemblies resulted in the creation of a new local coalition in 2017 named: Convergent Belleville. It was created to resist the privatization of a cultural space (*La Maison de l'air*), which the municipality planned to transform into a restaurant, but eventually failed to. Another activist group, collective *Place des Fêtes*, directly stems from the popular assembly of 2016 and is still active today. DALBV still uses this form of action. In March and October 2018, we organized two popular assemblies, one collaborative mapping session, and participated in those organized by other local activist groups (*Place des Fêtes*, June 2018).

Two other activist practices, the construction of an alternative source of information and the building of convergence, have spread from Nuit Debout to the local field of struggle. Note that alternative information and convergence were already central to the action of DALBV before Nuit Debout. In this respect, Nuit Debout has consolidated previously existing practices. In fact, the first newspaper of DALBV was published a month before Nuit Debout. Since then, DALBV has published its newspaper quarterly, and has opened it to allow other residents and activists to contribute to the publication. We paste it on the walls and distribute it at free price. It aims at being a discussion tool and tries to be a simple mean to auto-educate about urban issues. The publication of our own newspaper, and its circulation, have developed after our experience of Nuit Debout mobilization where free, independent and alternative media were necessary to counteract hegemonic discourses. Convergence, which refers to the emphasis put on solidarity practices and collaborative methods, is the second item that has shifted from Nuit Debout to DALBV. Since Nuit Debout, DALBV has managed to pursue its action in favor of convergence, strengthening its collaboration with other activist groups in two ways. On the one hand, DALBV moved into 'La Fabrik Cooperative', a structure that hosts twelve associations and collectives that works in many fields around popular education. On the other hand, DALBV was involved in the reactivation of networks within Grand Belleville. In June 2018, DALBV called for a meeting named 'Struggles and resistances in Belleville', in which local and national collectives participated. More than ten groups participated in the event, and we managed to launch three actions: to prepare a shared agenda for neighborhood struggles, to hold regular meetings with the other groups and to organize a demonstration (still in process), just as what we had already done in 2016 within the CRI.

DALBV also developed two new resistance strategies based on local initiatives, which reflect an adaptation to the local context and a rescaling of the Nuit Debout experience. First, DALBV opened the School of Urban Resistances. It organizes activities to understand and resist collectively the gentrification process, with residents and other activists. This initiative started in April 2018 with the screening and the debate around the film 'Paris Grand Capital', which addresses housing speculation and resistances to it. In September 2018, activists from Philadelphia joined us to present a documentary about alternatives to gentrification in the United States. Lastly, in October 2018, we organized a popular assembly to support resistance in two neighborhoods. Based on the model of the occupation of public space and convergence, we support the struggle of Romainville (four kilometers away from Paris) against the erection of a leisure park, which would contribute to the gentrification already fostered by the real estate project around the new public transport infrastructure. The second struggle we supported was that of La Plaine, Marseille, a neighborhood where the municipality has launched a redevelopment project under the supervision of the police, in response to the resistance of the neighbors. In November 2018, we organized a workshop against the Grand Paris project in the context of a popular education festival. These events demonstrate that DALBV has adapted the tactics from Nuit Debout to its local territory, by building its actions at different scales: the neighborhood, the Paris metropolis, collectives in other French cities and abroad. It reflects an attempt to make the link between the local territory and the global dimensions of the struggle in the local appropriation process. One consequence of the global mobilization has been to frame the convergence of struggles against the capitalist city at different scales and, simultaneously, in several places.

The second resistance strategy that Nuit Debout has influenced deals with our use of urban space in Grand Belleville. Since October 2018, DALBV is developing an itinerant project of urban popular education for children and adults in different parts of the neighborhood. The project is called D.A.N.G.E.R. or 'ANti GEntrification and Resistances Device'. It consists in the occupation of different places in Grand Belleville through the installation of a caravan. It proposes different games (such as an Anti-Monopoly) to invite residents to reflect on the changes in their neighborhood and look for alternatives. This project changes our traditional repertoire of action, using tools like art and multi-site occupation. Building on the occupation of urban space and the promotion of citizen participation during Nuit Debout, we decided to spread our resistance to different parts of the neighborhood. Itinerant activist actions through Grand Belleville have become a new way to resist gentrification and to provide the inhabitants with a space for expression. This project hopes to reinforce and valorize the identity in the neighborhood.

Conclusion

Our analysis shows that global anti-austerity mobilizations have significant influence on the structuring of place-based activism. This article has explored the contingency and agency dimensions of the diffusion process, putting emphasis on its spatial dimensions and its embeddedness in the urban and activist characteristics of places. We highlighted three factors that shape the spatial pattern of diffusion. First, contextual factors linked to the political history and the current gentrification of Grand Belleville sets the basis for urban resistances

to emerge. Second, the presence of dense activist networks and resources facilitates the diffusion and reception of larger mobilization, especially when some of the priorities put forward in large movements resonate locally. Diffusion is, to a large extent, a place-dependent process. Third, we confirm the significant role of initiator, here embodied by DALBV, in the diffusion of practices and ideas, based on the experiences of its members in larger anti-austerity mobilization (Nuit Debout). Not all activist groups had the same role in the diffusion process, and this variability depends on their ability and their wish to relate their local claims to global causes of struggle.

Beyond the factors that explain the spatial pattern of diffusion, this paper examined the ways anti-austerity strategies and ideological framework have changed and been re-contextualized locally. Based on the concept of geographical appropriation (Dufour, 2016), we show that the main practices and resistance strategies developed in Nuit Debout (occupation, convergence, new political practices based on horizontality) have spread from global to local arenas and have shaped different scales of action within DALBV. We observe two processes of appropriation. First, some practices of Nuit Debout, such as the popular assemblies, have been directly imported and implemented in Grand Belleville. Other dimensions of Nuit Debout, such as the convergence or the creation of alternative information, had a strong local resonance and reinforced previously existing practices. Second, throughout the creation of new resistance strategies, DALBV has adapted two items of Nuit Debout to its local territory. On the one hand, the collective is involved in the redefinition of its scales of action, in order to connect local struggles, strongly influenced by the social and political history of the place, to global challenges on urban neoliberalization and inequalities. On the other hand, it has developed an itinerant action, which sets a new relation to space and attempts to foster the participation of citizens in Grand Belleville.

The study of the geographical and local dimensions of the diffusion process casts more light on the consequences of recent large anti-austerity mobilizations on the restructuring of urban movements at the local scale. The recent literature on the right-to-the-city movements (Andretta *et al.* 2015; Purcell, 2013) has identified three factors in the development of urban struggles. First, the urban projects aimed at attracting economic resources, investors and developers, as well as their effects on inequalities and segregation, set the ground for urban mobilization to develop. Second, the local political structures (the type of actors involved in urban policy-making, the level of consensus among them and their relationships with the civil society) affect the patterns of urban protests. Thirdly, the socio-economic context within which each city is embedded, and in particular the local effects of the recent financial crisis, plays a role in defining the grievances and the modes of actions used in urban protests. Beyond the case of DALBV, anti-austerity mobilizations may have an important influence on urban social movements because they inaugurate new relations to two dimensions of space (Walliser, 2013). Global mobilization has put place at the center of their political practices and resistance strategies. They have also opened new ways to connect local claims to the struggle against global factors of urban inequalities. This articulation of scales is being particularly relevant in the organization and in the contemporary development of the right-to-the-city movement.

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