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Abstract

Commentators often remark upon the ‘festive’ or ‘tense’ atmospheres of major protests. This seems to signify the general outlook of the protestors, or the relations between them and the police. It signals the potential of the protests to unfold in a peaceful joyous manner or with violence. While ‘festive’ and ‘tense’ are useful ways of thinking about protest atmospheres, they are often used in a highly reductive manner. The literature on atmospheres from social movement studies also tends to reproduce this reductive idea of atmosphere, where they can be understood through uni-dimensional metrics. This chapter discusses the social movement literature, before trying to open the debate about atmospheres of protest more widely. Ultimately, the argument is that there is a much greater variety of atmospheric conditions in moments of protest. These atmospheres nestle together, changing and interacting as the conditions shift. Atmospheres are the affective tone of space. They are produced by those gathered in that space, by the spatial dynamics and the affective social conditions. Atmospheres affect those present, changing their capacity to act. Thus, it is important that we begin to understand their potential more carefully.

Bio

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Atmospheres of Protest

Illan rua Wall¹

The *Gilet Jaunes* protest of the 8th of December was billed as a major confrontation. News channels circulated the message that over 80,000 police officers would be specifically tasked with public order duty around France. The police announced that they would bring their armoured cars to the capital, emphasising their functionality: their mobility, the power to break barricades and water cannon to clear crowds. The previous weekend’s protests had seen extensive unrest, with police losing control of area around the Arc de Triomphe and Champs-Elysees. This unrest had been building since the first *gilet jaunes* protests, and even with major concessions from President Macron, they did not seem to be abating. All of this is to set the scene, to insist upon the affective intensity of the environment in which the protest took place. Protests, particularly big protests involving large numbers of people, do not happen in an affective vacuum. There are nervous energies circulating: foreboding, excitement, anxiety, hope. As Bataille remarked in the context of the united front against fascism in 1936: ‘What drives the crowds into the street is the emotion directly aroused by striking events *in the atmosphere of a storm*, it is the contagious emotion that, from house to house, from suburb to suburb, suddenly turns a hesitating man into a frenzied being’ (Bataille, 1983, 162). On the 7th of December 2018, a storm was building in Paris.

This chapter engages with the question of protest atmosphere. The argument is that affective atmospheric conditions of protest are important for understanding their social, political and legal potential. This is not to exclude the great wealth of research on causes or conditions of protest, much of which is evidenced in this collection, but to add another dimension. As such, it is an important addition to theories of performance and politics. It supplements the attention that speech and significance receive, with an understanding of a material communication of bodies (Brennan, 2004). Atmosphere is understood as the affective tone of space. It is produced by those gathered in that space, by the spatial dynamics and the affective social conditions. But it also affects those present, changing their capacity to act. Thinking about atmospheres thus supplements the framework of political performance (Rai, 2014), complementing its careful focus on specific events and scenes, while sensitising the analyst to affective circulation. The chapter will be divided into two parts. In the first, it will describe two extant engagements with protest atmospheres: the social movement studies analyses of protest atmospheres, and police tactics as atmospheric interventions. In the second part, the chapter begins to build an alternative account of protest atmospheres. Drawing initially from affect studies, the chapter ultimately produces an analysis of ‘nested’ atmospheres, where different affective bubbles sit within one another, refracting events through their affective tones.

Part I

Social Movements & Protest

Given the extensive subfield of research on the work of emotion and bodies in protest (Jasper, 2011, 285), there is surprisingly little research done on the affective atmospheres of protest. One exception is Della Porta and Giugni’s development of an atmospheric indicator. Situations are distinguished as ‘relaxed’, ‘tense’ or ‘mixed’, which is related to the ‘group emotional culture’ and the ‘situational emotional culture’. They point out that particular groups have specific rituals and patterns of meeting that are built up over time. Both the affective patterns and specific situational emotional dynamics affect the way that ‘discussions in meetings (and controversies) unfold and end’ (Della Porta and Giugni, 2013, 128). There are, however, fairly significant shortcomings which augur against the simple adoption of this approach for our purposes. Firstly, it is almost entirely dependent upon the demeanour of the people involved. Thus, we could question how far beyond a narrow mimetic paradigm Della Porta and Giugni can move us. There is little reflection on the socio-political setting nor the spaces inhabited. Secondly, while the ‘orientation’ of the atmosphere (as tense/relaxed) is useful, in the article its significance is not developed beyond the space of meeting rooms. A tense atmosphere may turn a discussion to acrimony and aggression more quickly, whereas differences of opinion in a relaxed meeting might be more tolerated. But this distinction is very much aimed at explaining how a discussion unfolds. Once we move this measure out of the meeting room and onto the streets in crowded protest, the distinction of tense/relaxed is less useful. Thirdly, Della Porta and Giugni seem to reduce atmospheres to a spectrum with tense/relaxed at its poles. But as we will see, atmospheres shape crowd behaviours. Thus, by reducing the types of atmosphere to a tense/relaxed polarity, they have precluded other atmospheres which generate other types of behaviour.

Van Leeuwen et al. (2015) provide a more complex metric, although it suffers from precisely the same shortcomings as Della Porta and Giugni’s. They gathered a large data-set of atmospheric perceptions: ‘A cluster analysis of... perceptions among participants of seventy-five

contemporary European street demonstrations revealed that demonstrators perceive four different atmospheres: harmonious, volatile, tense, and chaotic' (van Leeuwen et al, 2015, 94). Thus the 2009 National Climate March in London had a 'harmonious atmosphere'; the second UK student fees protest in 2010 was 'volatile'; the 15th of May Real Democracy NOW! protest in Madrid was tense; and the 2012 Pink Saturday Parade in Haarlem (Netherlands) was chaotic. The cluster analysis reduces multiple different accounts of atmospheres, to a narrow metric. It is then possible to correlate the perceived atmosphere to particular activities. The primary factor that they identify is the relation between the protestors and the police: Police repression lead protestors to perceive the atmosphere as volatile or tense, whereas 'if police either facilitated an event or did not intervene, demonstrators generally perceived a harmonious or chaotic atmosphere' (van Leeuwen et al, 2015, 93). While this study is at least drawn from a wide variety of different street protests, it advances our understanding of atmospheres beyond Della Porta and Giugni only insofar as it helps us escape a polar analysis. Instead each term represents clusters of associated feelings and experiences.

The argument against such a move is that a reductive response is unable to cope with the nuanced, situational analysis that is necessary to understand atmospheres. Indeed this shortcoming is acknowledged by Van Leeuwen et al, who encourage more qualitative investigation. Atmospheres are nebulous, they shift and change depending on behaviour, space, light, sound, and a myriad other elements. This rapidly shifting nature is important because atmospheres help shape crowd behaviour. We could take just two different scenes during the December 8th *gilet jaunes* protests in Paris to demonstrate this problem. In both *La Fanfare Invisible* ('The Invisible Marching Band') moved with the crowds. *La Fanfare Invisible* is an open group of musicians, who share a repertoire through their website, and welcome participants to join their 'joyful resistance, capable of strengthening the social fabric'. 'During a state of alarm we citizens as followers of non-violent strategy, produce musical bombing, treble clef terrorism, acoustic crime, and we put ourselves at the direction of the social movements and organizations in struggle.' (La Fanfare Invisible, undated). *La Fanfare Invisible* are an interesting atmospheric node. During the *gilet jaunes* protests on the 8th of December, they played with the protestors through the streets of Paris. Around the group, people sang and danced. They moved through streets and squares. At times they filled the entire space of a street or intersection with their music, and at times they were drowned out by chanting or noise. We might imagine a bubble of music around *La Fanfare Invisible*. The greater the intensity the greater the affective forces it exercises on those within the bubble. The affects that circulate around the band are different from those for whom it is part of the background din, or just out of earshot. But this observation underlines the problem with both of the studies discussed above. Because large crowds are made of constellations of different affective intensities. These atmospheres articulate with one another, a surge of joy or panic in one space might ripple through a square. At the same time we must see that atmospheres are uneven, inconstant and shifting. Thus to say that the atmosphere of a protest is 'tense' or 'chaotic' is not really to explore the actual circulation of affect.

We can see this more clearly if we examine two scenes more closely. In the first, *La Fanfare Invisible* play in front of a line of heavily armed *Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité* (CRS) at the intersection of *Rue Saint-Antoine* and *Rue du Turenne*, in the vicinity of *Place de la Bastille* (Là-bas si j'y suis, 2018). The camera circles around, moving from the dancers, the crowds who mill about, the band who sway rhythmically, and the police in heavy riot gear, long shields proffered, blocking streets. At one stage, the camera lingers on an officer who aims a rubber bullet launcher through

the riot shields. He gestures to the camera to turn away but despite everything it is not aggressive. Another officer gives a peace sign. This looks ‘mixed’ in Della Porta and Giungi’s measure, with elements of tension and relaxed atmospheres. In a second video, *La Fanfare Invisible* plays the same tune on the *Avenue de l’Opera*. The crowd is packed densely around them, and there is a greater intensity to the scene. Even on the poor-quality video, a different energy is apparent. The crowd jump up and down, dancing together in the tightly packed space (Elia, 2018). The camera is held high above the crowd and it pans around again. But as the chorus begins, large numbers of people simultaneously duck. The camera is turned downwards to the ground, the music suddenly fades away and people try to escape. The camera holder moves through plumes of tear-gas, and the clip ends. Again, with this second scene, we could put it on Della Porta and Giungi’s scale. But it is not clear that the question of ‘tension’ really adds anything explanatory. Or does it help us understand the changes of atmosphere to say that it was chaotic and volatile if the first scene was harmonious? We will return to these videos later, but for now my point is simple. If an atmospheric investigation is primarily concerned with the characterisation of a protest (as a whole) then it will lose most of its explanatory power. You cannot simply characterise the scenes as one thing or another. They are tense *and* relaxed *and* chaotic. But they are also perhaps celebratory, swelling, angry, slow, dangerous, invocatory, comical, challenging, terrifying, rapid, pulsing, painful, individuating, festive and panicky. It is impossible to detail the atmospheres of these *gilet jaunes* protests from these rough video clips with any certainty. We cannot utilise the ‘feel’ of the video because we are not simply talking about a visual economy. As we will see atmospheres are material. But *if* the atmospheres could be described by someone there, carefully ‘sensing’ the shifting dynamics (Wall 2019), the result could not be mapped against one or two axes.

Policing Atmosphere

Police manuals provide an interesting counterpoint to social movement analysis. As I have developed elsewhere public order manuals provide a shifting archive of tactical analysis of crowd atmospheres (Wall, 2019). There is huge variety and nuance in different countries’ manuals, but I will focus on the UK because the archive of manuals is generally available. Through each different iteration, we find a gradually shifting understanding of the types of atmospheres that the police want to create. Instead of Van Leeuwen et al’s emphasis on the perceptions of the protestors, the police manuals emphasise the tactical interventions that can be used to change crowd dynamics. In the first iteration of the UK manual (1983), the police generally sought to generate atmospheres that would frighten crowds. In 1983 there was a wholesale adoption of the tactics that the Royal Hong Kong Police Force had collected from the embers of the British Colonial experience (Wall, forthcoming). The former Hong Kong police commissioner explained that the aim of deployment in this model was ‘the projection of police units in an efficient, effective and formidable manner which creates an atmosphere in the riotous mobs of apprehension and awe which could be close to fear?’ If successful, ‘the crowd will scatter: “They run like the dickens!”’ (Quoted in Northam, 1988, 136). By breaking up crowds the intensity of atmospheres could be dissipated.

The manual suggested a two-stage approach: The police should begin with a ‘show of force’ and progress to the ‘use of force’ if the crowds had not dissipated. The tactics deployed as part of a ‘show of force’ sought to manipulate atmospheric conditions. They included: focus on how the police arrive onto a scene in large numbers to rapidly shift the atmosphere; the use of a full line of officers rushing forward as one in a baton charge; dog handling in ways that would

evince fear and worry. There were also a number of tactics that were entirely atmospheric. Section 17 describes a tactic where police beat their shields with truncheons:

despite training, confidence and levels of suitable equipment, police officers deployed against hostile crowds during public disorder are likely to experience emotions ranging from anxiety and fear to outright anger. The use of chanting, shouting or the rhythmic beating on protective shields can act as a morale booster prior to deployment and also serve to release stress in police officers. (Northam, 1988: 89)

This is to facilitate the loss of ‘police... anxieties about impending deployment... in the sense of group confidence engendered’ (Northam, 1988: 89). The police seek to underline their strength of numbers, giving rise to fear and trepidation.

After the ‘Battle in Seattle’ in 1999 (Smith, 2014), police forces internationally began to develop new tactics to deal with the anti-globalisation movement. The new model of ‘strategic incapacitation’ (Gillham et al 2013) included arrest of key organisers (decapitation) and the zonal management of protests, where for instance police will confine protestors to ‘free speech’ zones, at some distance from the events being protested (Passavant, 2009). Police forces experimented with ‘kettling’ or ‘containment’. Kettling is the process of holding protestors in a confined place for a period of time. The UK ‘Keeping the Peace’ (2010) manual explained that ‘containment’ was a ‘contingency tactic to be used when alternative tactics to prevent serious disorder, serious injury or loss of life have failed or are expected to fail’ (ACPO 2010, 110). However, this narrow construction of the tactic belies a complex atmospheric intervention.

Police decide to kettle protestors for two reasons. The first is that the kettle is an apparatus of differentiation. It is an attempt to divide the violent elements from the peaceful (College of Policing, 2018; OSCE, 2016). Chemistry provides the metaphor: the kettle is a tool for purifying mixtures. The police kettle ramps up the pressure by forcing the crowd to remain static. ‘Containment of the public can generate great anxiety and frustration’ as the review of public order tactics by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Policing remarked in 2009 (52). But this is not an accidental side-effect. As Anand explains: containment ‘is not a strategy that prevents disorder, contrary to the police claims, for it encourages more anger, fear and exasperation amongst those ‘contained’. During the [UK student] protests [of 2011], it was clear that peaceful resistance became less so only after police started kettling’ (Anand, 2010). The kettle gets the crowd to their boiling point. This intensity of atmosphere pushes some to express that anger at the police lines. In this way the crowd can be refined. People infuriated in the kettle are taken to have always been ‘violent elements’, even if it is the kettle that has driven them to confrontation. The second atmospheric dynamic is that the crowd is released only when it is exhausted. In other words, the kettle must always hold the participants just too long. The containment operates then to ‘allow’ the crowd to take place. But it intensifies energies meaning that the crowd soon burns itself out. The police release the participants in slow orderly streams. The aim here is to ensure that the crowded subjectivities do not re-form. The police fear that the release of the kettled crowd will lead to sparks of anger drifting around the tinderbox of the city, fanning flames at multiple sites. In this sense, exhaustion is essential.

Both the intensification of crowd dynamics and their exhaustion are crucial to the atmospheric dynamics of the kettle and are implicit in the police manuals and guidance. While the police manuals and social movement research provide us interesting hints at atmospheric analyses

and tactics, they do not progress the analysis of protest atmospheres sufficiently. Thus, in Part II, I will begin from a different framework, developing some of the insights of affect theory. In particular I will suggest two different approaches to thinking about protest atmospheres. In the first, I will use a disagreement about the ontology of affect to think about how atmosphere sensitises us to the body in a different way. In the second part, I will use the Umbrella movement in Hong Kong to think about nestled atmospheres, and shifting intensities.

Part II

Affective Atmosphere

Affect studies is an increasingly fragmented field of research. This section is not a summary of that field, but a way of framing one disagreement about affect which might help us think through an atmospheric account of protest. We could begin by noting that for many, atmospheres seem so obvious in everyday lived experience: The electrifying gig, the tension-filled room, the winter's evening in the pub before the crackling fire, the stadium during a local derby. When they are at their most intense, atmospheres are palpable. But once we place them into our traditional epistemologies, they seem to evaporate. This uncertainty can be understood as an extension of what Brian Massumi calls the 'autonomy of affect'. He argues for a strong separation of an affective realm from discursive and psychological fields. Affects are a direct material co-mingling of bodies without any need for language, history or any other mediation. Emotions are social, but affect is pre-personal. Ruth Leys summarises:

affects must be viewed as independent of, and in an important sense prior to, ideology – that is, prior to intentions, meanings, reasons, and beliefs – because they are nonsignifying, autonomic processes that take place below the threshold of conscious awareness and meaning. For... [affect] theorists... affects are 'inhuman', 'pre-subjective', 'visceral' forces and intensities that influence our thinking and judgments but are separate from these. (Leys, 2011, 437).

For Massumi affect circulates between bodies without the need for perception or signification. Cognition *always* comes late. It arrives micro-seconds after the moment and then 'makes sense' of what has occurred, as though it was always the driving force. Language captures the vibrancy of affect, it 're-register[s] an already felt state (for the skin is faster than the word)' (Massumi, 2002, 25). But affect remains independent of signification. In 'making sense' of affect the emotional response captures and closes the affect, reducing its potentiality. Affect has already escaped this capture, and Massumi writes, this escape is experienced as the punctual shock or a continuous sense of vitality or aliveness. 'One's 'sense of aliveness' is a continuous, nonconscious self-perception' (Massumi, 2002, 36). Affect is not mediated by thought, language, emotion or ideology, instead it is im-mediate. So, the epistemological uncertainty about how to treat atmospheres is another way of describing the autonomy of affect, its immediacy, its 'prior' materiality.

Although she does not share the Deleuzian inspiration, it is useful to parallel Massumi's with Teresa Brennan's work. Imagine yourself, for a moment, in a forest or a refuse dump: the smells of timber, damp and vegetation or the sour tang of human detritus. These smells come from objects decaying. As they rot, objects release molecules into the air. We smell these when

they reach a certain level, and where we are sufficiently attuned to them. But irrespective of whether we consciously perceive them, these molecules are there in the air. They touch our skin, we inhale them. People are no different, human bodies are in a state of decay. They release sweat, breath, dead cells and other detritus. Brennan insists that we can understand atmospheres as a certain type of communication of bodily matter, they are ‘the other’s affects’ (Brennan, 2004, 192). One body, reacting to a fear stimulus, releases a particular set of molecules. Another body, passing through that same space moments later, absorbs these molecules and their body changes accordingly. Senses heighten, they become more alert. Brennan insists that this is a non-linguistic communication of one body to the next, a material sharing of affects.

The origin of transmitted affects is social in that these affects... come via interaction with other people and an environment. But they have a physiological impact. By the transmission of affect I mean simply that the emotions and affects of one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail, can enter into another (Brennan 2004, 3).

Crucially, these physiological effects persist even when the bodily change never reaches the level of consciousness. Brennan specifically engages with crowds, where bodies press together with density. They are a site for particularly intense sharing of affects. The emanation of one body in joy, calm or aggression is shared on a material level. This material communication changes the bodies in the crowd, but it comes from the crowd. Thus, models of contagion become an important node for thinking about how crowds work.

We can contrast Massumi and Brennan’s ideas with William Mazzarella’s analyses in *The Mana of Mass Society*. He is suspicious of the pure materiality described in Massumi. Instead of taking inspiration from Gabriel Tarde, Mazzarella turns to Durkheim’s 1912 analysis of ‘mana’. This was the energy that vitalised ritual assemblies of specific Polynesian, aboriginal and first nation communities. ‘In the midst of an assembly animated by a common passion, we become susceptible of acts and sentiments of which we are incapable when reduced to our own forces’ (Durkheim, in Borch, 2012, 71). Durkheim wrote: ‘When they are once come together, a sort of electricity is formed by their collecting which quickly transports them to an extraordinary degree of exaltation. Every sentiment expressed finds a place without resistance in all the minds, which are very open to outside impressions; each echoes the others, and is re-echoed by the others’ (Durkheim, in Borch 2012, 72). Crucially, mana was not a psychological or inter-psychological relation, as in Tarde. Instead it was a social fact which itself had an effect on those present. In this way, Durkheim at once borrows heavily from the tradition of crowd theory, while also recasting its insights. Mazzarella argues that a constructive reading of Durkheim’s idea of mana allows us to approach the insights of recent affect theory in a different way. In Mazzarella’s hands, this vital energy becomes a social form. Trump for instance surged forth on a ‘mana wave’, he ‘made energy’. Trump and his team, were mana-workers, actively seeking out waves of resonance with the populace. This draws our attention not simply to ‘the *meanings* to which we find ourselves attached but also their *rhythms*’ (Mazzarella, 2017, 3). But it rejects the absolute division between affect and discursive circulation. Trump’s power was not (or at least not simply) in his overt messages, it was in the sly gestures where he undercut ‘what he was supposed to say’ – in his rhythms, habit, demeanour, gestures, confidence. The attempt to ‘fact-check’ his statements by the Clinton campaign, could never touch the core affective resonance – as Durkheim put it, the ‘phenomenal

oversupply of forces that spill over' (Mazzarella quoting Durkheim, 2017, 56). Resonance is 'constitutive' of the subject, but also, because mana passes through the subject that resonates, it also breaks it apart. As such there is a 'shared field of emergence in which no such boundaries [of subject and object] can be taken for granted' (Mazzarella, 2017, 5). In this way, Mazzarella maintains the rejection of the subject (that lies at the heart of much of affect theory) while rejecting the exclusion of discursive co-production.

Given that this is not a chapter about ontologies of atmosphere, I do not propose to insist upon one over the other account. Instead, I would like to borrow from Ngai and Anderson:

rather than an analytic distinction... [I suggest] we employ a 'pragmatic-contextual' distinction that is designed to attend to the different types of experience gathered together in a unitary category such as 'affect'. This is to make terms such as feeling, mood, atmosphere, and so on, into sensitizing devices designed to attend to and reveal specific types of relational configurations, rather than unproblematic claims about what affect really is 'out there' in the world. (Anderson 2014, 12)

For this chapter, what atmosphere actually *is* (whether entirely autonomous affective materiality or a social fact) matters less than what the question does. As Anderson writes: "The question of 'what affect is', gets replaced by questions of what the terms allow us to do: What do they attune us to? What do they show up? What do they sensitise thought and research to?" (Anderson, 2014, 12).

I want to suggest that the question of atmosphere in crowded protest sensitises us first to the question of being-gathered. Being-gathered here means being collected by a mana wave, or entraining with the affective dynamics of the situation. Being-gathered identifies the manner in which the atmosphere attracts, pulls in and whips up bodies. When bodies are out of sync with the atmosphere, then the atmosphere appears to stand out with an intense vibrance. But bodies become attuned to the situation and with this, the atmosphere fades into the background. The body is gathered by the atmosphere and it shapes their behaviour. To think about this we could return to the second video of the *gilet jaunes* discussed at the outset. In it the crowd jumping up and down around the band is a result of the music, but it is also contagious. People lose themselves in the moment. They dance because others are dancing, because the excitement and enjoyment of the shared music demand it, and because they dance they add to the growing atmospheric intensity. They are being-gathered by the movement, the rhythm, the noise, by the atmosphere. These layer on top of all the other factors that lead up to protest, such as their common cause, the opportunity, and the means to express their dissent. The music itself has complex histories which is also expressed and shared in some senses in the dancing.

Then the gas is released in the space and the shared feeling in the moment is shattered. 'Tear-gas' is actually a misnomer, it is a fine powder that is dispersed in clouds. As one, rather dry medical analysis put it:

Acute CS exposure... results in instantaneous irritation to the eyes, nose, mouth, skin, and respiratory tract. Dermal effects include itching, stinging, and redness, with potential blistering and allergic contact dermatitis. Ocular exposure can result in lacrimation [crying], blepharospasm [involuntary closing

the eyelids], itching, and burning sensation. When inhaled, CS often leads to coughing, choking, salivation, and chest tightness. (Rothenberg et al, 2016)

CS gas produces an immediate retreat from the environment. The gassed subject's breath, touch, smell and vision become excruciating. They become painfully aware of their body's basic functioning, to the exclusion of everything around them. As Lee comments for USA Today: 'many people feel tear-gas can be suffocating.... It produces a drowning feeling that your airways are filled up with liquid' (2014). Where the music draws people out of themselves, co-performing the shared atmosphere, the tear-gas forces bodies to turn in on themselves. But I want to suggest, that an atmospheric analysis would insist that this is also a form of gathering. Both the music and gas gather bodies into particular formations, atmospheres are conducive to different types of behaviour, they change the bodies' capacity to act. In one there is extension, shared rhythmic movement, in the second is panic, fear and isolation. But this is a *shared isolation*. Tear-gas is an atmospheric manipulation. It gathers bodies in panic. In short, atmospheres focus us on the circulation and sharing of others affects, whether that is through pre-discursive materiality and through a medium of resonance.

The Tone of Space

Atmospheres firstly sensitise us to bodily resonance and contagion. But they also encourage us to think about the spatial dynamics. For example: a cathedral captures height, the emptiness of the space above is encapsulated in a way that is designed to bear down upon those within; a stadium (particularly when circular or oval) reflects the crowd, posing one crowd against another with the sport in the middle. By reflecting a crowd against another on the other side of the stadium's bowl, the space generates cycles of intensification as one fires the other up. However, when we shift our focus away from spaces that have been specifically designed for particular atmospheres, it becomes a little more difficult. To begin to understand how these atmospheres might work, it is useful to examine one moment of crowded protest, and the spatial dynamics involved.

In late 2014, more than two hundred thousand teenagers and young adults were involved in an occupation of a number of key sites around Hong Kong. The North side of Hong Kong island is built around car-laden roads, high-rise tower blocks and elevated passageways. The occupation began as a protest on Tim Mei Avenue which borders the east side of the Hong Kong LegCo complex, but Tamar Park and Connaught Road were the ultimate epicentres. Tamar Park sits sandwiched between the two key sites of political power in Hong Kong – between the LegCo (Legislative Council) and the Office of the Chief Executive. To the south of this complex is the polluted, noisy and congested dual carriageway of Connaught Road. The occupation began on Sunday the 28th of September 2014. That Sunday afternoon the crowds gathered first in Tim Mei Avenue, and then began to wrap around the LegCo into Tamar Park as numbers grew. The police were out in force, readied for action after two previous nights of protest. They faced off against tens of thousands of secondary school and university undergraduate students. As dark began to fall, the crowds were beginning to spill over from Tim Mei Avenue and Tamar Park. Prof Petula Ho described the essential moment when the crowds began first to move from Tim Mei Avenue, the walkways and footpaths onto the arterial dual-carriageway of the Connaught Road.

The cars were driving slowly [along the Connaught Road].... at some point we ... just called [to those on the other side] to just [gesturing] 'come, come on,

come, join us'. And then suddenly, the street, the traffic slowed, and actually it was quite empty.... So we decided to just go across it. The cars were stopping. I think the occupy idea was already there. And then somebody said we should just sit down. And we did. We could see the whole road was full.... Suddenly there were people everywhere... It was really, really a very strange moment. (Interview with author)

For her, the space felt 'freed', with people just walking around the road that had just been full of cars whizzing past. 'It was just so sudden. So glamorous', she explained. Glamour is a really interesting way of characterising this moment. Etymologically glamour connotes magic or enchantment, in current usage glamour is a quality that causes excitement and attraction. It is a quality or aura that elevates a body, drawing them out of the ordinary (Roach, 2007). After the first people moved across the street and the traffic was diverted, the crowd fanned out and the occupation began. Over the course of the next days, the occupation of the Connaught Road would expand. Within a week the tents would emerge, and within two weeks the occupation would stabilise as barricaded zones of occupation were established.

As the occupation grew, people established what they called their 'villages'. These were understood through a nostalgic frame: 'Umbrellaville harkened back to the old Hong Kong we loved and missed. All along Harcourt Road, micro-communities emerged where people smiled, the streets were inviting, and the nights – the nights were just beautiful' (Ng, 2016, 168). These villages consisted of neighbouring five to ten tents. New intimacies emerged as boundaries between 'neighbours' broke down. One student occupier contrasted these village spaces to the normal relations within the city's residential districts. She explained to me that if you knew more than two or three neighbours in your apartment complex you would be considered nosy. But in the occupation, the private spaces carried a radically different atmosphere. 'When night fell, we saw strangers sitting in circles and chatting on the street. We couldn't remember the last time we saw strangers sitting in circles and chatting on the street. These simple activities may be commonplace anywhere else in the world, but they have all but gone extinct in emotionally unavailable and socially awkward Hong Kong' (Ng, 2016, 168). The South China Morning Post picked up on these emergent villages:

the protesters had demonstrated that they treasured the community they had developed.... 'People actually want to stay as long as possible to ensure the sense of community and livelihood.'... 'Hongkongers used to be quite cool to each other, never saying hello to our neighbours and not even knowing their surnames after 20 years,' Chan [another occupier]... said. 'Perhaps this movement could make a change in everyone.' (Szeto, 2014)

There were intimate atmospheres in the villages. Crucially, however, these minor spaces of intimacy and nostalgia are nestled in a broader performative public space where different types of affects circulate.

The occupation happened around the site of government in Hong Kong. The LegCo building itself is a comparatively low, perhaps ten stories. It is an elongated rectangle with large a curved glass wall on its north end, forming the exterior wall of the room that houses the legislative assembly. Emerging from the South end of the LegCo building is a 26 story tower. Slightly askew, atop this tower is a four storey roof/bridge across to the Central Government tower. The building

corresponds roughly to the Cantonese and Mandarin symbol for a gate. It signifies transparency and openness (Legco Council Commission, undated). Tamar park is sandwiched beneath these two towers of the executive and legislative branches. Instead of the building dwarfing small groups of people in the park as imagined in the architectural images (hok.com, undated), masses of people flooded the space, changing the affective dynamics of the space. Judith Butler underlines the performativity of moments of assembly like that around the LegCo building. She explains that there is more to occupation than simply ‘bodies that come together to make a claim in public space’ (2015, 70). To understand them in these terms is to ‘fail to see that the very public character of the space is being disputed... when these crowds gather’ (Butler 2015, 71). The crowds performatively enact a new ‘space of appearance’ that is qualitatively different from the conventional public sphere. When the students and activists occupy Admiralty, Mong Kok and other sites, they remake the public space. It no longer bears the atmosphere that the architects sought to design into the space. Instead, becomes a new space of appearance for these bodies. By acting as if they were the political assembly, they enact a new space of political assembly. This space ‘cannot be separated from the plural action that brings it about; it is not there outside of the action that invokes and constitutes it.’ (Butler, 2015, 77).

If the occupation as a collection of ‘villages’ was marked by new intimacies of friendship, the occupation as public space tended to different atmospheres. Jason Ng’s account of the first night of the occupation is a useful window onto the atmospherics of the crowd’s ‘space of appearance’:

As night fell, the tension rose. Harcourt Road – an eight-lane thoroughfare that connects to Connaught Road – was strewn with broken umbrellas, water bottles and lone shoes, left behind by fleeing protestors. Mobile phones were rendered useless.... We moved to a footbridge outside the Police Headquarters on the ominously-named Arsenal Street. There, high above the ground, we saw a formation of riot police wearing army helmets and gas masks advancing steadily from Wanchai toward Admiralty.... Light only by the streetlight’s amber glow, the scene was eerily reminiscent of the streets of Beijing on that fateful June night in 1989. (Ng, 2016, 33)

Ng contrasts the denuded space of the Harcourt Road, littered with detritus of popular disorder with the police formation on Arsenal Street as it advances on the occupation. He describes the tempo changing as he travelled to the site of intensity in Admiralty and its ‘growing euphoria... suffused with tension and trepidation’ at the protest (Ng 2016, 30). Tension is key, but not in Della Porta and Giugni’s sense. This is tension between different spaces, between different atmospheres. There is foreboding, fear, a sense of imminence and immediacy.

We can contrast the two logics of space: the occupied zones as a political space of appearance represent a general scale where political claims can be made, addressed to the LegCo itself, and the office of the Chief Executive; and the villages as a site of common life, the everyday trivial dynamics of private space, now shared with ‘neighbours’ and fellow villagers. The two logics of space tend to generate different atmospherics, but they are not separate: As the atmospheres of the political space of appearance intensify, the village spaces fade in intensity; but equally as the confrontations fade and the occupiers return to their public intimacy of the villages. There is an ebb and flow of these sites of intensity. An overlap and a separateness. There is a danger that we understand the atmospheric dimensions of occupation through the spectacular moments when

the political space of appearance is staged in confrontation or demonstration. But the point here is also to see the sort of ‘public intimacy’ of the villages as equally important to the atmospheric constellation of the zones.

Conclusion

Atmosphere provides an important field of investigation for protest, and for political thinking more generally. In the context of protest it is the presence of crowds that renders atmosphere a particularly acute dynamic. It does not replace more conventional accounts of social movements (their historicity, symbolic economies and representational claims), but supplements this analysis with a focus on the unfolding of protest situations and their affective and atmospheric valence. The chapter does caution against reductive accounts of atmosphere, where the fluidity of a scene is reduced to a single term, which can never capture the plurality and dynamism. Just as a theatre critic would be very slow to claim that all plays could be reduced to two or four moods, theorists of protest and performative politics should be equally discerning. Atmospheric analysis requires careful attention to the affective flux of particular scenes. We must pay attention to the rhythms and flows of bodies, to the spatial dynamics, and to those terms which disclose the affective auras at play, because it is essential to begin to understand atmospheres as they shape bodies’ capacity to act.

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