PArtecipazione e COnflitto
https://ese-journals.unisalento.it/index.php/paco/
ISSN: 1972-7623 (print version)
ISSN: 2035-6609 (electronic version)
PACO, Issue 19(2) 2026: 408-418
DOI: 10.1285/i20356609v19i2p408-418

Published 15 July, 2026

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EDITORIAL/SPECIAL ISSUE

The Infrapolitics of Repression: An Introduction

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ABSTRACT: This article reviews the main issues surrounding repression as covered in the existing literature. The main theoretical issues addressed include the forms of repression, their actors, and their potential effects. This issue brings together research on cases of discreet, informal, hidden, or even invisible repression and control, which nonetheless have a decisive impact on the capacity for political action among groups and the individuals who comprise them. In doing so, this article highlights the scientific and social relevance of the special issue on the infrapolitics of repression, explored through the lived experiences of nonprofits and activist groups. This issue presents different conceptualizations that seek to move beyond the most obvious theorizations of repression, situating it beyond its most visible forms and the obvious actors.

KEYWORDS: Infrapolitics, Repression, Control, Non-Profit, Community-Based Organization, Social Movement

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1. Introduction

A shift towards greater legal and police repression is being observed in democracies across the Global North, reshaping the possibilities for political action therein. This crackdown, which some have described as an "authoritarian turn" (Talpin and Delfini, 2025) over the past decade, is taking place through a number of repressive laws, some of which have been implemented by bypassing official decision-making structures. This is the case, for example, with the application of the state of Emergency Law in France, extended well beyond the events that prompted its enactment—the 2015 terrorist attacks—with many of these measures, intended as temporary and restricting the public freedoms of demonstration, assembly, and expression, having since become part of ordinary law (Agamben, 2005; Hennette-Vauchez, 2023). One might also consider the case of Quebec, where, over the course of a few months (January to April 2026), nearly a dozen complex bills were introduced, affecting—either directly or indirectly—the ability to demonstrate, to organize politically, and to secure public funding for one's organization.

The use of control mechanisms tends to shift toward surveillance and punishment in several national contexts. This is particularly the case in countries that criminalize local civil society organizations working to defend rights and freedoms and oppose the genocide in Palestine (Della Porta, this issue). These political stances are accompanied by police and military forces whose mandates are shifting, as seen, for example, in the United States. At the same time, the securitization and criminalization of groups are driven by increased and rigidified administrative mechanisms, surveillance (Arsenalp and Betancor, this issue), and greater control over the missions of funded groups (Chevallier and Talpin, this issue; Lefebvre, this issue). For this reason, we felt it was particularly relevant to address unusual repression that takes place away from the public spotlight (Dussault and Dufour, this issue).

In this introduction, we outline the empirical and theoretical frameworks we have drawn upon and, at the same time, highlight the major contributions of the articles included in this special issue. It should be noted that the comparative perspective (France–Quebec) forms the basis of our collective reflection - even if other national contexts are studied here (Germany, Spain, United Kingdom, the US and Chile) - and it is indeed the convergences and divergences in our national repressive frameworks that have led us to propose the concept of infrapolitics of repression.

2. Thinking Repression through its Infrapolitics

Where does political repression begin? Studies of repression and the control of political activity tend to focus on the most visible forms of protest, and the most obvious actors. The most frequently used definition of repression in sociology and political science presents repression as a set of "efforts to suppress either contentious acts or groups and organizations responsible for them" (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001: 69). This understanding of repression focuses on direct action by the state to limit protest events by force and use of coercive methods. Following the work of McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, a significant proportion of current definitions of repression relate the phenomenon to a will from the state to silence, control or prevent political contestation on the part of actors outside the state and the institutionalized political system (Dufour and Dussault, 2022; Dupuis-Déri, 2013; Earl, 2011; Earl and Soule, 2010; Koopmans and Statham, 1999; Mitchell and Staeheli, 2005; Wood, 2007, 2015).

While research on overt state repression is essential, this special issue aims to broaden the scope of analysis of repressive practices by examining the full range of institutional practices designed to control, regulate, or limit dissent and criticism. In recent years, research has been conducted focusing on less visible forms of repression, based in particular on practices of stigmatization or material hindrance (Garcia, 2014; Jämte and Ellefsen, 2020; Marx Ferree, 2004; Talpin, 2016; Maestri and Montforte, 2021). Different sets of practices can be mentioned: the way in which organizational funding can influence political action; the delegitimation or

stigmatization of activist groups or causes; the marginalization of certain actors by participatory devices; the constraints on the material and physical resources necessary for organizing; the division of activist groups or the fostering of competition among them, etc. Still little documented empirically, these discrete forms of control nevertheless strongly impact people's ability to criticize existing powers. This issue contributes to refining the analysis of repressive practices by highlighting another facet: the infrapolitics of repression.

Infrapolitics can be understood as the infrastructure of politics, the domain of more or less discreet practices and processes that fuel the production of sociopolitical relations outside the public arena. In *Domination and the arts of resistance*, anthropologist James C. Scott works more specifically on infrapolitics of subordinate as "a wide variety of low-profile forms of resistance that dare not speak in their own name" (Scott, 1990: 19), the interstice within which the "hidden transcript" of the subaltern lies. But his approach goes beyond the perspective of the subaltern alone, by also incorporating the analysis on the "hidden transcript of powerful", the idea being to consider the "public transcript" of domination as a result of power struggles based on public performances and on more discreet, if not hidden, actions. As Scott states, "paying close attention to political acts that are disguised or offstage helps us to map a realm of possible dissent", and even to address "the issue of hegemonic incorporation" (*ibid.*: 19-20).

Something important that we, social scientists, often tend to forget when using Scott's conceptual framework is that he studies extreme forms of domination, such as slavery, serfdom, and totalitarianism. Applying his ideas to democratic contexts, even when these are affected by illiberal or authoritarian tendencies, must therefore be done with caution. As Scott points out, resistance in the realm of hidden transcripts can often be explained, for example in the case of slavery, by the fear of repression, as slaves can reasonably expect such repression to take the form of physical violence, possibly even leading to death. In such contexts, those in power, although they are more or less aware of the risks of revolt and therefore of the importance of working to secure the consent of their subordinates, can ultimately rely on this threat, which is not the case in democratic regimes, where all citizens are supposed to have the same rights, including the right to express their disagreement with those in power without being under threat of violence. In that "public transcript" of liberal democratic domination, the state acts as the guardian of rights and freedoms, including pluralism and the freedom of association, and thus regulates the relationships between the government, organized civil society, and citizens, in which everyone accepts the rules of the peaceful democratic process. In the case of community-based organizations in Quebec, the public transcript is even one of "conflictual cooperation" (see Lefebvre; Dussault and Dufour; Toure Kapo et al. in this issue), which has also gained ground but has received less recognition in other contexts, such as France. However, this public transcript tends to evolve as reactionary forces rise, with the state increasingly establishing a justification for restricting the scope of freedoms in the name of security (see Arslanap and Betancor in this issue) or austerity (see Chevallier and Talpin in this issue), while maintaining the necessary facade of respect for rights and freedoms. In a democratic context, repression is costly, and those in power do not have an interest in formally expressing it.

That is why we deem it important to consider all the discreet practices through which those in power seek to prevent protest without making it publicly visible, by focusing on the realm of repression that does not say its name. By extending the infrapolitical perspective to the issue of repression, the idea behind this issue is to look at the range of practices that take place beneath the public surface of socio-political relations, through which official powers (or certain social groups) seek, more or less intentionally, to obstruct citizen criticism, whether by weakening organizational or financial capacities, internal relations, delegitimizing actors, or by fueling forms of self-censorship. Furthermore, the democratic context does not always lead—at least in the case of civic action—to a strict division between the hidden transcripts and sub-politics of the dominant actors and those of subaltern groups. The construction of public transcripts and hidden transcripts takes place within the multiple interactions and relationships between civic groups and established authorities, primarily the state and its various branches.

This approach thus derives from a hypothesis regarding the historical evolution of the infrapolitics of repression in liberal democracies: this evolution should be situated within the broader process of the state's

monopolization of violence and the public interest, and thus also as part of the civilizing process of social mores (Elias, 1973). For example, when one of the activists from the Poor People's Campaign interviewed by Thomas-Hébert (in this issue) discusses reactions to the police surveillance their movement faces, he seems to put things into perspective: "People like to think that we're some kind of huge threat. We're not yet." Is the infrapolitics of surveillance and, more generally, of preventive repression, linked to an increasingly significant overestimation within the state—and thus *by* the state—of the risks arising from protests? Should this be seen as the historical development of a kind of precautionary principle aimed at ensuring the state a monopoly on political debate and the definition of the public interest?

3. Reconceptualising repression ?

This approach brings us to reexamine the boundaries of repression, particularly in relation to institutional control. In 2011, Earl was already asking: "What distinguishes political repression from other forms of control, such as general social control or crime control? Moreover, when is something actually repressive, versus just resistant to change—e.g., what is the difference between people who drag their feet against change versus those who actively suppress actors pushing for change?" (Earl, 2011: 263). In this issue, some articles examine the shifting forms of control, referring to practices aimed at politically instrumentalizing and neutralizing civil society actors—that is, ensuring they do not stray from the government's line and, even more so, the hegemonic power structure, toward repression, through a spectrum of practices ranging from reprimands and micro-sanctions to more overt attacks (see Chevallier and Talpin; Lefebvre). These articles demonstrate the extent to which repression is constructed in advance, through threats, anticipation, and self-censorship, as groups and their participants internalize the limitations on political possibilities and develop interests (particularly financial ones) in maintaining the existing order, thereby echoing research on channeling and depoliticization. As Thomas-Hébert's article explains, institutional surveillance may be another form of infrapolitics that prevents repression by making the use of sanctions and prohibitions—particularly administrative ones, such as fines—less likely or less necessary (see also Arslanap and Betancor). Furthermore, as Boursier's article on a masculinist digital platform shows, infrapolitics can serve as a space for a symbolic reversal of social relations, through which dominant social groups can portray themselves as victims of progressive resistance movements and perpetuate a sort of hidden transcript of the dominant dominated.

Some articles also highlight the importance of the dialectic between the formal and informal dimensions of control and repression mechanisms (see Dussault and Dufour). More specifically, they show how, in the democratic regimes studied, informality becomes a particular resource for authorities to repress without saying so (verbal warnings, behind-the-scenes disqualifications, withholding of information, unofficial exclusions) (see also Thabourey). These repressive practices are all the more potent because they rely on formalized mechanisms, particularly the material reality of discretionary funding allocations, which allows those in power to claim they are acting in accordance with the law and to present themselves as beyond reproach. Thus, the article by Chevallier and Talpin highlights the significance of the tension between the threat of cutting funding and actually doing so.

Without attempting to provide a perfectly unified theoretical framework, this issue presents a series of conceptual proposals aimed at highlighting less visible, more discreet, and sometimes insidious forms of control and repression. Most of the articles thus engage with the extensive existing literature, highlighting, for example, specific forms of repression, such as administrative repression (Arslanalp and Betancor). Others, instead, draw on the concept of infrapolitics by theorizing "inverted infrapolitics" (Boursier), referring to the everyday practices of actors who perceive themselves as marginalized, even though they are not structurally dominated in the same way that subaltern groups actually are. The article by Dussault and Dufour proposes to include informality within the dimensions of repression theorized by Jennifer Earl (2003) in order to grasp both the forms of repression and their effects. Drawing on considerations linking physical space and discursive space, Thabourey offers an understanding of the deployment of repression through the lens of the relationship to public space and that of (de)legitimation in the public sphere.

4. The infrapolitical mechanisms of repression

The infrapolitical perspective on repression in democratic contexts requires examining a range of mechanisms for which repression is often not the primary or official purpose, but which can influence the ability of civil society actors to participate in public debate and criticize those in power. Whether they come from public funds or philanthropy, funding provided to civil society organizations is frequently portrayed in articles as one of the central tools through which pressure can be exerted on these groups—either beforehand by "channeling" their actions toward forms that eliminate criticism, or afterward through reprimands, or, as a last resort and in relatively rare instances, through funding cuts (as shown in this issue by Chevallier and Talpin; La Forgia; Lefebvre). By making activists' survival contingent on the depoliticization of their actions, funding not only pushes them to self-censor in anticipation of the risk of sanctions through funding cuts, but also to internalize these risks to the point of depoliticizing their own perspective. Another financial tool of the infrapolitics of repression is the fine imposed on participants in protests. In France, for example, some participants in the Yellow Vests movement and in organizations advocating for migrants' rights have, over the years, been hit with fines amounting to thousands, or even tens of thousands of euros, often on flimsy legal grounds. These material sanctions can be deterrents to collective action. Arslanap and Betancor show, for instance, that the threat of such a penalty also serves, on a more individual level, to discourage participation.

The research compiled in this special issue calls for a focus on the material conditions of mobilization. For instance, the degree of professionalization of civil society in Northern countries—and thus its reliance on financial resources—makes it structurally dependent on funding, opening the door to specific infrapolitical forms of repression. While the articles in this issue are all based on case studies, comparative analysis could prove useful in the future to understand the extent to which national or regional contexts—and in particular the economic models of civil society—facilitate or hinder material repression. Putting into perspective the various contributions gathered here—and particularly between France and Quebec—suggests that it is perhaps less an issue of public funding than a matter of allocation of these funds and the power dynamics underlying them.

On the other hand, the articles demonstrate just how central interaction and discourse are to the infrapolitics of repression. The contemporary context of liberal democracies allows for a shift from visible, material mechanisms toward a form of repression that takes place through interaction, relationships, and affect—areas where institutions and those in power can act more arbitrarily, without having to account for their actions. Starting from often polished roles—for example, within the narrative of equal partnership—interaction actually becomes the site where power asymmetry is reproduced, and thus where order is enforced, or sanctions and repression are applied. Several articles in this issue address the subtle mechanisms of interaction, which lie beneath official narratives. Where Yanez Lagos analyzes it in collective memory, the articles by Lefebvre and by Talpin and Chevallier examine interactions between non-profits and institutions in partnership spaces based on professionalism and conviviality (Chevallier, 2022). Meanwhile, Boursier focuses on online masculinist spaces of exchange that, for their part, purport to be based on false interactions of solidarity. According to these articles, approaches intended to foster collaboration and solidarity are co-opted for the purposes of control and repression, serving to regulate either dissent or individual perspectives. The establishment of a relationship of trust, discussions on administrative matters, and evaluations become tools of control affecting directly the ability to act or even the mandates being defended (Lefebvre; Talpin and Chevallier).

This discursive and relational dimension of infrapolitical repression is also found in large-scale surveillance systems targeting various groups deemed subversive (in this issue: Arslanalp and Betancor; Leone; Thabourey; Thomas-Hébert). As with Operation COINTELPRO (Earl, 2003), these forms of repression rely on building trust and relationships to access information, but also on monitoring and manipulating political activity. Furthermore, intrusion into private life alters the relationships between members of the same group (Arslanalp and Betancor, this issue).

While Marx Ferree (2004) highlighted the role of ridicule and stigmatization in her analysis of "soft" forms of repression, several articles explore these issues in greater depth. In many respects, the stigmatization of causes and organizations—though rarely considered forms of repression—often serves as the ideological backdrop, the justification, for harsher or more direct forms of repression. The case of the French Muslim organizations studied by La Forgia is telling in this regard (this issue). It is first and foremost because they have been cast as internal enemies—and notably as accomplices to terrorism—that it then becomes possible to repress them more formally: administrative dissolution, cuts to subsidies and the freezing of bank accounts, and the profiling and surveillance of activists. While symbolic and material forms of repression are sometimes considered separately—Erik Olin Wright (2010), for example, distinguishes between "hegemonic repression" and "despotic" or coercive repression—the articles in this issue allow us to consider the interactions between these different repressive practices as a whole.

Ultimately, the study examines a wide variety of repressive phenomena across several contexts: while three articles address the case of Quebec (in the field of collective advocacy, in youth centers, and in a disadvantaged and racialized neighborhood of Montreal), and two focus on France (in the city of Lille and the nonprofit sector, as well as within French Muslim nonprofit organizations in their interactions with the state) the other contributions take place in Chile (the 2019 uprisings), in Great Britain (the environmental civil disobedience movement), in New York (affinity networks of direct action), in Madrid (post-Indignados), in Berlin (the movement against the genocide in Palestine) and within far-right online communities.

5. The actors of the infrapolitics of repression

Studies on repression and the control of political activity focus primarily on the most visible forms of collective action and on the most obvious protest actors, often referred to as social movement organizations. Definitions of repression thus tend to reduce the phenomenon to a desire on the part of the state to silence, control, or prevent political dissent by actors outside the state and the formal political system. However, the infrapolitical perspective shows that repression is driven and sustained through more dynamic and multifaceted relational dynamics and power struggles (in this issue, Dussault and Dufour; Thabourey; Yanez Lagos). While the state often plays a key role, not all state bodies and institutional levels should be conflated into a single entity. In this regard, some studies highlight the decisive role of judicial bodies and the national level (La Forgia), of municipalities in the articulation of administrative and participatory modes of control (Arslanalp and Betancor; Chevallier and Talpin), and that of departments and regional institutions (Lefebvre), while others reexamine the repressive mechanisms deployed by police forces (della Porta; Thomas-Hébert).

Beyond the state, what has been described as a "culture war" seeps into the media and civil society. As a result, various strategies of control and repression are being carried out through public and private media, as well as social media. These include forms of soft repression such as ridicule (Marx Ferre, 2004), but also more direct attacks that portray social movements as dangerous or political action as irrational. Furthermore, numerous forms of control and repression are exercised by some of its most conservative fringes—such as masculinist groups (Boursier). In these cases, discourse—often online—as well as adherence to identity markers serve as entry points for controlling subjectivities and the actions that may follow. While some studies highlight lobbies as potential agents of repression, this special issue does not escape the tendency to document the role of private companies with greater difficulty, although the role of lobbies is addressed (Thabourey). The case of environmental mobilizations is perhaps where the blurring of public and private forms of repression is most evident. In addition to the involvement of multinationals in SLAPP lawsuits aimed at silencing whistleblowers, we can observe interactions between private and public actors in repressive processes. Not only can the tightening of legislation be driven or inspired by private actors such as conservative think tanks, but state repression can also be encouraged by certain private actors such as agricultural unions or far-right groups (see Corroyer, 2022), with the attempt to dissolve the Soulèvements de la Terre movement in France, serving as a paradigmatic example.

In this regard, this issue allows for a more nuanced analysis of repressive configurations, which cannot be reduced to a simple opposition between the state and protesting actors. The infrapolitics of repression also stems from civil society, as a field of struggle. While the literature on counter-movements has obviously addressed this issue, it has perhaps analyzed less how the state can be used by the protagonists in conflict. For example, one cannot understand the state repression of Muslim nonprofit organizations studied by La Forgia in France independently from the mobilizations of conservative nonprofit actors exerting a form of pressure on institutions to repress Muslim nonprofit organizations, particularly via social media. The nonprofit sector is thus conceived in certain contributions not merely as the target of institutional repression, but also as a site for the development of such repression.

This issue also aims to broaden the analysis of repression to include civil society actors who are not specifically involved in protest movements. While a (minority) portion of civil society explicitly identifies as activist, the stance of the vast majority of nonprofit organizations toward politics remains ambivalent. Most position themselves on the side of citizenship and the improvement of living conditions in society, but numerous studies have shown how much they can depoliticize their actions, that is, remain at a distance from the divisions running through society (Elisasoph, 1998). In this regard, this issue also helps transcend the sometimes artificial boundaries between social movement organizations—potentially protest-oriented and thus subject to repression—and nonprofit organizations, more consensus-oriented and therefore supposedly not targeted: more consensual nonprofit organizations may occasionally find themselves involved in a conflict and, in doing so, become the target of discreet repression.

6. How to Study the Infrapolitics of Repression

Studying repression often implies focusing on the experiences of those subjected to it, incorporating both a critical and analytical perspective on their lived experiences. This type of research relies on protocols centered on interviews, typically conducted individually. Because the participants' lived experiences are at the center of the interviews—and thus the effects of the violence they have endured are exposed—recruitment for this subject can prove complex. Often due to a lack of time, but primarily due to a lack of trust and a fear that the use of the data might add further symbolic violence to their life stories, participants are reluctant to open up. Without the ability to verify the researchers' reliability with their peers, several key participants refuse to take part in research. In this sense, the sociology of repression highlights the importance of researchers' reputation within the communities being studied (Dussault and Dufour, this issue). In fact, since the repressive episodes under study are not always fully resolved, participation in the research by those who have been repressed can prove risky, potentially fueling future repressive episodes as acts of retaliation.

Another distinctive feature of this issue is its focus on various approaches to ethnography: through the long-term observation of community and activist organizations (Lefebvre; Thabourey; Thomas-Hébert), as well as through anonymous netnography (Boursier). Regardless of the field, this method aims to reveal—through observation as well as a certain form of participation—the ways in which participants make sense of their actions, interactions, and interventions, and more specifically how they construct and negotiate the meaning of practices in a context where repression is not often acknowledged as such. In interviews as well as in everyday situations, research allows us to ask those subjected to repression about their experiences of control and repression, and about the logical and narrative reconstructions of the pathways and rationales that underpin it.

Few studies, moreover, attempt to access the institutional mechanisms of repression to uncover the routines and individual attitudes that fuel it, as well as the beliefs and socialization of those in charge, which make repression acceptable: what do those in a position to repress political actions actually think? The articles in this dossier have not quite managed to break through this barrier, which raises the question of its origins: does it stem from an oversight on the part of sociologists, who tend to prioritize the perspective of the victims of

repression? In that case, this would prompt a reexamination of the very definition of repression in the literature, by showing how it is partly constructed by the victims, who, moreover, constitute themselves as such, sometimes even when they are part of dominant groups, as is the case with the online masculinist groups studied by Boursier. But we must also consider that the lack of data produced on the infrapolitics of repression from the perspective of the repressors can be explained by the obstacles they pose, according to a logic that is, all things considered, very simple: to safeguard the democratic public record, the state does not allow the truth of repression to be brought to light, including by social scientists, who are, moreover, increasingly viewed as enemies of the state.

This lack of data, therefore, poses a major epistemological problem, insofar as the practices that are reported are not always objectively verifiable (see Thomas-Hébert on surveillance): they remain manifestations of the raison d'état, which cannot be easily investigated. But this principle of opacity varies in such a way that the degree of transparency of a repressive practice is, conversely, indicative of how openly it is acknowledged, and thus points to forms of transformation in the public discourse of sociopolitical relations. As a result, a whole set of data is missing, particularly when it comes to analyzing the rationale behind repression and its intentionality. While such actions are sometimes openly acknowledged, the cases studied here are more often ambiguous and would likely not be presented as repression by those in power. Further research remains to be done here—and perhaps history and archives may prove valuable in this case—to delve into the black box of repressive mechanisms.

7. The Effects of the Infrapolitics of Repression

The literature broadly documents the effects of these types of repression (as a source of disengagement or a chilling effect, but also as a potential source of motivation for action), but these effects are rarely linked to a specific type of repression. Thus, literature reports physical effects on protesters, such as injuries and deaths. These forms of repression may also have psychological, socio-emotional, financial, and legal effects, as well as impacts on individual trajectories (Bellot et al., 2016; Steinhoff and Zwerman, 2013). Furthermore, research documents a range of demobilizing effects that make the transition to individual and collective action more costly and difficult. Consequently, the actions frequency and intensity may be adjusted in response to the constraints imposed on it (Bellot et al., 2016; Earl and Soule, 2010; Mitchell and Staeheli, 2005; O'Brien and Deng, 2015; Réveillere, 2024). To a lesser extent, a few studies highlight the effects of radicalization and intensified engagement (Codaccioni, 2013; Combes, 2020; Almeida, 2008; McAdam, 1990). While the literature generally indicates that repression has curvilinear effects, does the study of the infrapolitics of repression—and thus of often non-coercive forms of repression—point in the same direction? Contrary to this somewhat mechanistic analysis, the contributions gathered here emphasize that non-lethal or non-coercive forms of repression—such as funding cuts, stigmatization, fines, or surveillance—most often have demobilizing effects.

The infrapolitical perspective on repression raises the more specific question of the chains of interaction that link intentions or routines of control or repression to their consequences for individual and collective actors, encompassing all processes of reaction, adaptation, and resistance over the short and long term. In particular, it demonstrates the extent to which the hidden, unofficial, latent dimension of repression fosters in civil society actors a predisposition toward anticipation, fear, and even paranoia (Arslanap and Betancor). In some cases, as in Thomas-Hébert's article, civil society actors adapt by taking the opposite approach, particularly when surveillance and infiltration lead to the consolidation of collective identities based on nonviolence. In the New York movements studied, Thomas-Hébert even portrays activists who come to terms with hyper-surveillance, or even find it amusing. While this can be seen as a way of turning coercion to the advantage of social movements by strengthening their collective identity, one can also—building on the idea that these reactions are part of the long-term processes of the civilizing process and the governmentalization of society—question whether there is actually an adaptation, if not a resignation, of social habits, as the state

increasingly obstructs any form of social transformation. Thus, in the case of Quebec, Dussault and Dufour highlight the detrimental effects of informal forms of repression on socially marginalized actors. They note the clear possibility of an impediment to the democratic participation of marginalized people. In studies conducted in France, Chevallier and Talpin, as well as La Forgia, point out that administrative and financial repression weakens the nonprofit organizations studied, or even leads to their disappearance.

8. Resistance to the Infrapolitics of Repression

The organizations studied are not passive victims of repression; they employ a range of tactics to counter it, even though these responses are not the focus of this special issue. In light of infrapolitical practices of repression, acts of resistance can be difficult to acknowledge publicly, as evidence is often lacking to pursue legal action or raise public awareness. When they do take legal action, as Muslim organizations in France have done, these groups struggle to win cases and even to see rulings in their favor enforced.

Sometimes, actors also have an interest in maintaining a public narrative of trust or partnership in order to secure their funding, their access to certain institutional arenas, or their reputation. Resistance, therefore, often takes place behind the scenes, particularly through the development of a hidden narrative of domination (see Yanez Lagos, this issue) composed of memories of constraints, prescriptions, reprimands, and repression.

By providing an anonymous setting, surveys and interviews often serve as a platform for this type of narrative. Certain interorganizational dynamics can emerge through the sharing of individual experiences, the identification of patterns, the collection of evidence, and, possibly, the holding of public authorities accountable or the exposure of the actors involved. But such dynamics tend to be rare, especially when infrapolitical mechanisms of repression—and funding in particular—tend to undermine the very possibility of their occurrence, for example by exerting pressure on activists' material and symbolic interests.

The hidden transcripts of domination thus often tend to serve as a safety valve. Here, the infrapolitical perspective encounters the question of the sociological profile of the people concerned, and in particular the potential differentiation in the forms and degrees of resistance, with several possible hypotheses: Is it that the more the people concerned are dominated—particularly when facing multiple dynamics of domination—the more difficult it is for them to move beyond the stage of muted, if not hidden, criticism; or, on the contrary, are they more inclined to revolt to the extent that they have less to lose? What about middle-class activists, who are not personally affected by the problems they denounce, but whose careers and personal fulfillment may depend on the group's funding?

This issue does not provide definitive answers to all these questions, but it does suggest avenues worth exploring. In particular, the articles clearly highlight the fact that repression today takes many forms, and that what is happening "under the radar" poses real challenges to liberal democracy, which seems to have fewer and fewer autonomous civic spaces to offer.

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