Introduction

Why Infrapolitics Matters

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**Introduction**

**Why Infrapolitics Matters***

Guillaume MARCHE

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Infrapolitics is to politics what infrared is to light. Its domain encompasses the acts, gestures, and thoughts that are not quite political enough to be perceived as such (Scott, 1990 183). But the term can be defined either in terms of discretion—what passes politically unnoticed—or of significance—what does not quite qualify as political. When used in the service of studying collective action or social movements, infrapolitics evokes mobilizations that do not respond to the criteria for widely recognized forms of political action.¹ This immediately raises the question of whether infrapolitics should be understood as what lies beneath the threshold of politics, or of the political itself—either "en deçà de la politique" or "en deçà..."
du politique” as the French would put it (Bosteels 209). This polysemy begs the additional question of whether one is addressing mobilizations whose means do not quite make the mark as political, compared to conventional ones—even as their ends are clearly or explicitly political—, or practices which are not quite political either in terms of form or content.

Existing scholarship on infrapolitics understandably emphasizes the latter, more evident sense of the notion, as do, to some degree, the essays in the first section of this edited issue of the *Revue française d'études américaines*. But the following contributions help to grasp the great degree of overlap between the two approaches, even as they seek to explore their differences. As I discuss below, the notion of infrapolitics has mainly been developed by anthropologists interested in subaltern populations—particularly in Africa, and South and Southeast Asia. Because they are deprived of access to legitimate channels of expression, subaltern people will not vent their frustrations or claims in conventional political ways, but rather in discreet, stealthy ways—their goal being not to gain official legitimacy, for which they are somehow disqualified, but to make a claim for dignity either by upholding, or, paradoxically, by challenging internal group cohesion. In recent years in France, the notion has been invoked by sociologists commenting on the 2005 urban riots. Whereas the public debate was saturated with accounts of the riots as irrational, counterproductive explosions devoid of any legitimate political expression, political sociologists who were more attuned to the study of subjectivities endeavored to describe the riots as politically meaningful collective rebellion (Lapeyronie; Kokoreff).

But in addition to considering such general theoretical issues, an edited issue of the *Revue française d'études américaines* on infrapolitics also ought to examine what it means to speak of infrapolitical practices in the United States. This question is inscribed within the broader institutional context of American studies in France, which is dominated by historical and political science-based approaches, on the one hand, and by a cultural studies paradigm, on the other. Infrapolitics is a conceptual tool first developed by anthropologists and then quickly appropriated by historians and sociologists. But the term has also drawn the attention of scholars working in a range of fields, from cultural studies to ethnomusicology. The following essays give a sense of the diverse ways in which history, political science, and sociology appropriate the concept. And the focus on mobilizations is an opportunity to reflect on how sociology enters into a dialogue with other disciplines in American studies. But these contributions also show that infrapolitical forms of mobilization are a productive epistemological challenge for a variety of disciplines that traditionally focus on already constituted social movements, collective actions, or political processes.
**INTRODUCTION**

The study of social movements is one of the most fertile fields of sociological research in the United States. Specialists of the Civil Rights movement, the women’s movement, the environmental movement, the movement for global justice, and the LGBT movement, among others, have produced a wealth of theoretical literature. This scholarship generally explains both the circumstances within which movements coalesce, and their significance in relation to the society, historical context, or social movement field in which they emerge. Social movement sociology in the United States thus examines how, and how efficiently, organizations mobilize resources in order to launch and sustain movements (McCarthy and Zald), which political opportunity structures and political processes are more or less amenable to the emergence of collective mobilizations (McAdam; Tarrow), and what cognitive frames are used by social movement organizations and actors (Benford and Snow, 1992; 2000). Because infrapolitics is, by definition, beneath the threshold of the “political,” social movement sociology tends to consider it as lacking a significant degree of politicization, or as foreshadowing a fully-fledged, politically consequential mobilization that is yet to come.

Scholars working in the field of cultural studies, on the contrary, have consistently examined cultural representations—be they textual or visual, elite or popular—through a political lens, thus uncovering the political substratum of many collective or individual practices that are not strictly political in themselves. They have focused on subordinate groups which, though lacking access to recognized political channels, have been able to exert resistance through cultural practices and discourses. In the wake of Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s seminal work, subaltern studies scholars, for instance, have examined the political dimensions of dissident, subaltern, or spoiled—in the Goffmanian sense—cultural practices (Prakash). Similarly, queer theory has shown how dominant culture is both challenged and shaped by dissident forms of expression in its midst (Butler; Sedgwick; Warner). But much of the scholarship emerging out of cultural studies focuses on representations—i.e. cultural artifacts to be deconstructed in order to expose the power dynamics involved in their production. As a result, such studies tend to approach culture from a Foucauldian perspective as a symptom of the power relations which underlie all social interactions. Much of the work being done in queer studies, in particular, thus verges on “textualism” rather than examining the social experience of the actors involved (Gamson; Marche).

Some infrapolitical forms of mobilization, however, may not be regarded either as failed movements or movements-to-be, or as cultural artifacts which, though not directly rooted in the social, do perform a symbolical form of critique. Protest graffiti, for example, cannot be approached in the same way as organized forms of political protest, such as public meetings, political campaigns, or institutional lobbying. Nor should it, at the same time, be
confounded with mediated cultural expressions that more or less explicitly convey a form of resistance, like protest literature, underground cinema, or spoiled art. The United States, in this respect, strikes one as a rather fecund field of inquiry, since American society displays a particularly strong attachment to freedom of expression in the midst of a crisis of democratic political representation. This, in addition to the lesser presence of the State—compared with many other industrialized countries, especially in Europe—makes the United States particularly amenable to alternative modes of civic and political participation.

**Infrapolitics: Subaltern Politics**

The concept of infrapolitics was most clearly articulated by anthropologist James C. Scott in his 1990 *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, which defines the infrapolitical as the cultural and structural substratum of those more visible forms of action that attract most scholarly attention. “So long as we confine our conception of the political to activity that is openly declared,” Scott asserts, “we are driven to conclude that subordinate groups essentially lack a political life or that what political life they do have is restricted to those exceptional moments of popular explosion” (1990, 199). By focusing on subaltern people Scott has challenged scholarship on dissent and protest to reassess the definition of interventions in the public sphere. One of his contributions to an understanding of not quite political forms of action is his critique of the “safety valve” theory—the notion, for instance, that carnivals offer opportunities for cathartic representations of rebellion, which in turn deflect the possibility of actual rebellion. On the contrary, Scott claims, historical records document the occurrence of slave, peasant, and serf rebellions during carnivals (1990 172-182, 188).

Subaltern forms of resistance produce “hidden transcripts,” that is to say critiques of power that escape the notice of the dominant and contrast with the “public transcripts” of power relations, which may contain no record of opposition. Such discretion allows the dominated to covertly resist being symbolically appropriated by the dominant. “[T]heft, pilfering, feigned ignorance, shirking or careless labor, foot-dragging, secret trade and production for sale, sabotage of crops, livestock, and machinery, arson, flight” are among the stratagems through which the dominated surreptitiously counter or minimize their material appropriation (1990 188). Not only do these hidden transcripts not hamper actual resistance, Scott argues, they “sustain resistance in the same way in which the informal peer pressure of factory workers discourage any individual worker from exceeding work norms and becoming a rate-buster” (1990 191). Infrapolitical acts thus operate insidiously, beneath the threshold of political detectability, which makes them all the more reli-
able vehicles of resistance: the less detectable they are, the more efficiently they conceal the resistance they inspire in the dominated.

Infrapolitical forms of resistance thus do matter politically, because these “offstage” discursive practices are “continually pressing against the limit of what is permitted onstage, much as a body of water might press against a dam” (Scott, 1990 196). Unobtrusive acts of insubordination not only exact a cost on the dominant, but they represent a threat if they are not held under check—and they cannot be held under check for lack of being noticed, as Scott shows in his 1985 study of a small village in Malaysia, _Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance_, which is also reminiscent of Eric Hobsbawm’s work on marginal rebellions in Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Scott’s work thus raises crucial questions for this edited issue on infrapolitics and mobilizations, especially whether or not—or under which historical or social circumstances—actors go below the political radar for lack of opportunities to use institutional channels or conventional vehicles of collective action. This is, in part, why some analysts have characterized the 2005 urban riots in France as infrapolitical: the upsurge of rebellion expressed a sense of exasperation and outrage at being denied recognition and respect, on the part of youths of immigrant origin living in impoverished neighborhoods, whether it is to be regarded as a form of collective action unto itself despite its unorthodox form (Lapeyronnie), or as the nascent stage of a more distinctly political mobilization via elections or advocacy (Kokoreff). This issue of the _Revue française d’études américaines_ partly corroborates this view. Sandrine Baudry shows how disenfranchised urban populations use “greening”—i.e. urban horticulture and agriculture—in order to stake out their legitimate position as city denizens, in the face of a for-profit, privatized model of urbanism. Aline Macke presents young American Muslims’ use of punk-rock music as a way of shaping a collective identity in a social and political environment that pigeonholes them into categories with which they do not identify. To some extent, Jean-Baptiste Velut concurs with this view in his analysis of the student anti-sweatshop movement’s use of extra-governmental strategies, which argues that consumption-related means of action allow organizers to keep collective mobilization closer to their target audience’s biographical experience.

But Scott’s definition of infrapolitics is also an invitation to pay attention to the relationship between the medium and the signification of infrapolitical protest, resistance, and mobilization: we may hypothesize that certain significations can only or will best be expressed in stealthy or discredited ways, and that the choice of informal or marginal channels may be the condition for the reception of certain meanings. This is what some of the following essays emphasize. In his piece on the 1943 zoot-suit riots in
Los Angeles, Luis Alvarez shows social actors who forcefully challenged the contours of the national polity. Rather than compensating for lack of opportunities, my own contribution argues, protest graffiti can constitute powerful forms of infrapolitical mobilization because they have the potential to convey alternative oppositional meanings. Benjamin Shepard also insists that the Church Ladies for Choice contribute to an LGBT mobilization for abortion rights by deploying play, humor, and emotions such as friendship and mutual support. More generally, Baudry, Shepard, and I all refer to the legacy of situationist strategies of “détournement” whereby conventional signs are subverted to articulate oppositional messages. In this way, too, infrapolitical forms of mobilization are akin to the “tactics” which Michel de Certeau contrasts with “strategies”: these “apparently meaningless” practices can express resistance, since “they remain heterogeneous to the systems they infiltrate and in which they sketch out the guileful ruses of different interests and desires” (34).

Hidden Transcripts: Infrapolitics as Stealth

In his 1994 book Race Rebels: Culture Politics and the Black Working Class, historian Robin D. G. Kelley draws on Scott’s notion of hidden transcripts to study various forms of African American rebellion in the twentieth-century United States. The resistance of blacks workers in the early twentieth century, working-class challenges to middle-class values on the contested terrain of popular culture in African American communities, insubordination on buses in the pre-Civil Rights South, and working-class challenges to the Civil Rights movement’s leadership in the 1960s are but a few examples of how Kelley “dig[s] beneath the surface of trade union pronouncements, political institutions, and organized social movements, deep into the daily lives, cultures, and communities which make the working classes so much more than people who work.” He endeavors to “make meaning” of actions which apparently lack political significance, “rather than dismiss them as manifestations of immaturity, false consciousness, or primitive rebellion” (3-4). When labor unions excluded blacks, for example, pilfering, sabotage, disobedience, or mobility (leaving one’s job) were effective ways for black workers to defend their dignity in the face of both economic oppression and competition with white workers (chap. 1).

Kelley’s view of infrapolitics also sheds light on African American intra-racial relations, such as when black workers engaged in folk spiritual practices, music, or dance, instead of following the prescriptions of the black middle class, who cultivated more acceptable forms of participation in public life in the context of churches or political and voluntary associations (chap. 2). The pursuit of spiritual elation or physical pleasure, Kelley argues, not only
asserted the existence and dignity of a distinctly working-class black culture, but also perpetuated black working-class creativity through the transmission of folk knowledge and practices. Like Scott, Kelley insists that such infrapolitics need not be organized, or even intentional to be significant, as in the case of disobedience or vandalism on racially segregated public transportation. Isolated incidents involving black passengers making fun of a white person, behaving noisily, or pretending not to understand the driver’s instructions accrued political significance by aggregation. The accumulation of such incidents created complicity among African Americans in the Jim Crow South, thus reinforcing their sense of community, dignity, and empowerment.

Thus, for both Scott and Kelley, infrapolitics rests on the creation, propagation, and careful divulgation of hidden transcripts. Discreetness stands as a strategic advantage, whether the actors realize it or not. Specifically, Scott shows that when the hidden transcript—which is, almost by definition, elaborated in “social spaces insulated from control and surveillance from above” that subaltern people create for themselves (1990 118)—insinuates itself into the public transcript, it does so “in disguised forms” (1990 136). In Scott’s 1990 version, as in Kelley’s, the evasive capacity of infrapolitics is critical to its efficacy: the less clearly its message and meaning can be pinned down, the more effectively it can undermine domination. Can we thus also label infrapolitical those interventions in the public sphere which are rather explicit, recognizable, or straightforward? This is a question which this edited issue on “Infrapolitics and Mobilizations” seeks to explore. Indeed, all of the following essays deal with practices that cannot be deemed unobtrusive, since they amount to actual intrusions into public space. Regardless of whether they are quite vocal or relatively quiet, the actions and practices under consideration here—from the more politically-edged consumer boycotts, pro-choice counter-demonstrations, protest graffiti, and urban riots, to the less politically obtrusive Muslim punk rock and community gardens—are, in fact, noticeable. In this sense they grapple with the conceptual contours of infrapolitics, thereby engaging in debate with Scott and Kelley. But whereas the essays in the first section examine mobilizations whose very political or infrapolitical nature is in question, thereby discussing whether the political agenda needs to be “hidden” for a practice to qualify as infrapolitical, the contributions in the second section explore how mobilizations sometimes deploy infrapolitical means towards explicitly political ends.

In a sense, the dependence of infrapolitical resistance on hidden transcripts is a function of the degree or nature of oppression. The same constraints do not apply to a slave on a plantation in the antebellum South, a peasant in a feudal system, a black working-class youth in a segregationist state, or a disempowered, disgruntled anti-war activist at the onset of the Iraq War in 2003 (Scott, 1990 198-199; Chvasta). Besides, individuals who are
not oppressed but happen to have dissident ideas or actually insist on maintaining their hegemonic status, do not need stealth—as the examples of authors of anti-war protest graffiti and of white participants in the 1943 zoot-suit riots illustrate (Marche, this issue; Alvarez, this issue). Thus, whereas active repression at the hands of the state or of the powers that be may, and often does, make it necessary to develop hidden transcripts in order to be able to resist, the averred existence of infrapolitics is not restricted to such extreme contexts. The polity’s political apathy, the prevalence of quasi-hegemonic public discourse, or simply an issue’s practical absence from the public debate may make infrapolitics an apt tool for mobilization. Locating and identifying infrapolitics, in other words, requires taking heed of the context.

The following essays therefore suggest that infrapolitics should not be interpreted in too restrictive a sense—such as requiring an altogether hidden transcript. Nor should it be taken too loosely. Some scholars tend to use it as shorthand for grassroots or cultural organizing, or mobilizations which do not address the state or are not formally institutionalized (Böhm et al.; Bousetta; Mantovan). Such readings consider infrapolitics as a set of practices that is essentially subservient to politics, rather than seeking to engage with the distinctive character of infrapolitical forms. In the 2005 French context, for example, whereas Lapeyronnie explored the specificities of infrapolitics—in terms of rudimentary means, disenfranchisement, moral outrage, and the mobilization of emotions—Kokoreff, while acknowledging their meaningfulness, merely viewed the urban riots as infrapolitical mirror images of, and gateways to, demands for equal rights and access that were simultaneously articulated by legitimate political and advocacy organizations. The essays in this issue, even those in the second section, refuse to approach infrapolitics as politics “redux,” and thus avoid treating infrapolitics in binary terms—in this sense following Scott, who “unveils a third realm of subordinate discourse that lies strategically between the openly avowed to those in power and that which takes place beyond the perceptual field of the dominator” (Lugones 177).

**Culture and Politics: Infrapolitics as Style**

Infrapolitics in this sense is political, except that it is not easily perceptible as such. Kelley develops this insight of Scott’s by focusing on intra-racial tensions within the African American community, arguing that it should not be reified as a given, homogeneous whole. Instead, African American collective identity is a construct resulting from contested processes. For example, considering infrapolitics highlights the social tensions that played themselves out beneath the surface of the southern Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. It was infrapolitical popular pressure—such as rioting, confronting the police,
and looting (89)—that induced the movement’s middle-class leadership to define slum living conditions as a form of racial inequality, tantamount to segregation, thereby integrating a claim for socioeconomic rights into the broader demand for formal civil rights. “Thus poor people not only challenged the civil rights leaders, but their daily acts of resistance and survival substantially shaped the movement,” says Kelley (78).2

Considering infrapolitics is therefore an invitation to take seriously the links between politics and everyday life experience, and to examine how actors’ subjective experience weighs in on collective mobilizations. Kelley’s work on infrapolitics has been applied more recently by other scholars seeking to understand the dynamics in play at the intersection of gender, race, and ethnicity in the context of youth rebellion. In a way that is somewhat reminiscent of Jeff Ferrell’s 1993 book on Denver’s tagging culture, both Luis Alvarez’s study of zoot-suit culture, and Andrew Diamond’s work on minority youths in Chicago (2009) examine style as a modus operandi of the rebellious affirmation of collective identities which are at odds with both the dominant white culture, and the established narratives ascribed to the collective identities of minority groups. Earlier work had already borrowed from Stuart Hall and the Birmingham School of cultural studies, to identify the inscription of politicized identity narratives in the cultural expressions of ethnoracial minority groups, such as sociologist and historian George Lipsitz’s 1988 study of Mardi Gras Indians in New Orleans. More recently, ethnomusicologist Charles Lockwood has written about Mardi Gras Indians faced with the concurrent challenges of heightened visibility, the commercialization of their expression, and displacement after Katrina.

The interplay between culture and politics is also at the core of another influential articulation of infrapolitics. In their 1997 collection Between Resistance and Revolution: Cultural Politics and Social Protest, Richard G. Fox and Orin Starn borrow from Scott the notion that the mask of submission may hide, hence protect and nurture, the face of rebellion:

By challenging the view of the political as understandable only from speeches, marches, and elections, studies of everyday resistance encouraged and expanded understanding of the dialectic of compliance and opposition that takes into account the concealed as well as the visible, the scattered as well as the organized, the small as well as the massive. (3)

Fox and Starn, however, focus on the halfway zone between large-scale revolution and small-scale resistance. The interdisciplinary essays in their collection deal with a variety of fields, ranging from Indian farmers chaining themselves to trees in order to resist the lumber industry, to Brazilian feminists demonstrating to call for the president’s impeachment, to the impact of comic TV programs on Okinawan ethnic identification. Between Resistance
and Revolution thus proposes a version of infrapolitics that is remarkably close to the essays in this issue.

French specialists of the United States have also resorted to infrapolitics in order to account for processes which are liminal to politics, such as Emanuelle Le Texier’s study of everyday practices among Latina women in San Diego’s barrio, which achieve a distinct form of social organization or of collective identity. Such approaches specifically emphasize the cultural dimension of intermediary forms of resistance. As Fox and Starn put it: “Our premise is that protest necessarily involves struggle over ideas, identities, symbols, and strategies . . . and we assert the inextricability of the culture of politics and the politics of culture in mobilization” (3). The contributions to this issue also use infrapolitics to shed light on the liminality and interconnection between culture and politics. Whereas the essays by Macke and myself, and the interview with Shepard specifically focus on cultural practices—respectively musical, visual, and theatrical—to unveil how they obliquely contribute to a political affirmation, Alvarez, Baudry, and Velut take culture in a broader sense to analyze everyday practices—dressing, gardening, and consuming—as vehicles of collective affirmation or collective action that embody the political in social actors’ experience, thus making it at once more elusive and more intimate.

However, the following essays suggest, invoking infrapolitics to make sense of mobilizations is not just shorthand for addressing the significance of culture in social movements. Scholars working within the “new social movement” paradigm of social movement theory in the wake of Alain Touraine and Alberto Melucci have, of course, highlighted the symbolical dimension of collective action. More recently, Francesca Polletta’s groundbreaking work has also shown how narratives—whether truthful or not—are not just emotional additions to mobilizations, but play an effective part in them; and James Jasper has argued that, far from being an insignificant aspect of social movements, emotions are the mainspring whereby social actors construct—or fail to construct—political identities that are in agreement with their deep, subjective selves. This rich body of literature has claimed that, in order to attain a better understanding of the reasons why people participate in social movements, we need to wonder what participation means to them.

But focusing on infrapolitics means shifting the emphasis to the specific imbrications of culture and politics in mobilizations that either fail to qualify as political (which we may term sub-political), or address political issues with politically disqualified means (which we may term quasi-political). This is not quite the same as likening “fragmented forms of resistance” to Gramsci’s “war of position,” which Owen Worth and Carmen Kuhling define as “subtle forms of contestation that are strategically aimed at transforming common sense and consciousness” (34-35). Nor is it equivalent, for instance,
to Bleuwen Lechaux’s recent study of activist street theater by such groups as the Billionaires for Bush and Reverend Billy, whose “non-preaching” irony allows participants to reconcile their militant identity with their professional identity as stage actors. Instead, I find truth in this definition by Alberto Moreiras:

_Infrapolitical action is the type of symbolic action in the real that refuses an identification with the political. That is, it refuses to understand itself as political action, as an action in the political sphere, which is the sphere of power relations between people. It enacts a rupture from the political, not in the name of the political, but rather in the name of an essential affirmation that, while involving the ethical, cannot confine itself to the ethical. Infrapolitical action exceeds the political and it exceeds the ethical, but it is still a practical action oriented to the relation between people._

(190-191)

Even though it is articulated in a context, and for purposes, that considerably differ from ours—namely a philosophical exploration of Hispanism as a valid category for the study of Latin American literature—Moreiras’s definition invites us to consider how infrapolitics operates in its own right, rather than regarding it simply as a stepping stone or a preliminary to politics.

Nor should we fetishize infrapolitics, either by exaggerating its achievements (Reed 3-4), or by reading as infrapolitical anything which is simply not political. This is a particularly acute problem, since infrapolitics is usually an exogenous label: scholars and other observers, rather than the actors themselves, will deem a form of public participation infrapolitical. Prisoners’ riots may thus be regarded both as endowed with some strategic efficiency, rather than irrational reactions to stress, and as failed endeavors to voice a political claim in disqualified terms, since they often lead to a tightening in incarceration conditions (Useem and Kimball). Likewise, historians of the early American republic differ—as did politicians, journalists, and commentators at the time—on whether vernacular, everyday forms of public life allowed significant participation in public space for those who were deprived of citizenship rights: women, African Americans, Native Americans (Pasley et al.). Women’s history scholars also debate whether cookbooks testify to the kitchen being primarily a site of women’s exclusion from the public sphere, or instead highlight the constant interaction between public and private, and signal cooking as an effective form of women’s—especially ethnoracial minority women’s—participation in civic life (Le Dantec-Lowry). The following essays do address these concerns, insofar as they specifically probe the very contours of the notion, and its usefulness in their field of study. The question of exogenous characterizations is crucial in the essays by Alvarez, Baudry, and Macke, while the issue of efficacy is largely the focus of Shepard, Velut, and myself.

Thus infrapolitics also raises the question of audiences and meanings: it is a fine line, indeed, between constructing oppositional meanings for oneself.
or one’s own group and trying to persuade others of those meanings. Focusing on infrapolitical mobilizations therefore challenges scholars to be attentive to who the audiences are, and to how or how much actions do affect meanings. The following contributions offer varied views on these issues: Baudry and Macke address internally directed meanings whose main impact is to affect collective identity constructions; Shepard and I discuss externally directed but politically marginal actions whose effectiveness is problematic because it is dependent on their capacity to reach receptive audiences; Alvarez and Velut deal with more politically visible mobilizations whose ability to convey meanings is a function of their disqualified or questionable forms of action.

Scott’s groundbreaking contribution was to suggest that infrapolitics achieves effective outcomes for subordinate people, even short of translating into fully-fledged politics or social movement mobilization (Scott, 1990 192-197). Infrapolitics does matter insofar as it can be a prefiguration of a movement to come (Worth and Kuhling 35-36), or because it allows actors to retain, uphold, or perpetuate their capacity for agency when the political context precludes any serious chance of making tangible political gains (Chvasta 5-6), much in the way that the women’s movement survived thanks to cultural abeyance structures while in the “doldrums” (Rupp and Taylor; Taylor; Staggenborg). But the point of this issue of the Revue française d’études américaines is to examine infrapolitics by not casting its merit, interest, or usefulness solely in terms of what it does or does not pave the way for.

This edited issue includes a center color folio with photographs reflecting the various contexts the essays address, and beyond. This issue’s authors have contributed commentaries on the photographs that are to be read p. 118-119.

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INTRODUCTION

WORKS CITED


Guillaume Marche


INTRODUCTION


NOTES

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1. The term mobilization is used in a loose sense, to include forms of participation in public space that fall short of being social movements, but nevertheless imply some degree of collectiveness.
2. For an analysis of the interplay between the Civil Rights movement and black youth gangs in Chicago from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s, see Diamond, 2008.
3. This is also the focus of two important collections edited by Hank Johnston, Enrique Laraña and Joseph Gusfield, and by Johnston and Bert Klandermans.
4. These included banquets, picnics, barbecues, but also, for instance, the manufacturing of a giant cheese that was delivered to Thomas Jefferson by Baptists from Cheshire, Massachusetts, in 1802, as a token of their belief in the new president’s commitment to religious freedom: only recently have historians begun to ponder over the active involvement of women in the making of the cheese, and their likely political agenda beyond religious freedom (Pasley). I thank my dear departed friend Naomi Wulf for bringing these examples to my attention.