

## COMMENTARY

# The Return of the Popular

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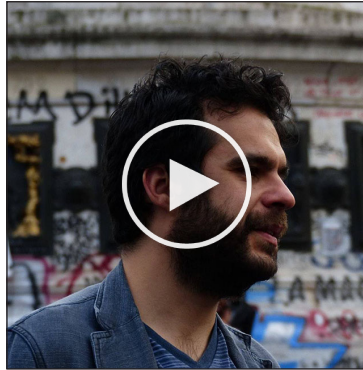
What is the appropriate research agenda for media studies after the financial crisis of 2008 and how might it be located in the 'Popular'? This contribution emphasises the extent to which the present is an exceptional historical phase and represents a seismic shift in terms of paradigm. Major economic consequences have led to impoverishment of large sections of populations and a sense of insecurity that has fostered resentment against political elites. The popular movements of 2011 Occupy Wall Street, out of many others for example *Indignado* signal a clear historical break with post-1968 protest with their refusal to accept that history has 'ended' and these look towards a possible new era beyond neoliberal capitalism and postmodernism. Huge increases in the volume of research conducted relating to political activism and protest are currently taking place. In theory interest has reverted to reading classical or modernist authors – Gramsci, Machiavelli – and away from postmodernist thinkers, that also reflects this new environment.

Postmodernism's retrenchment from the political to the personal (post-1968) is in retreat in the face of a unifying sense of the popular appearing in three related spheres: space and place, agency (as a manifestation of will) and culture. Popular digital culture as such becomes a key resource for emancipatory social movements and arena for research and reflection in our field.

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**Keywords:** Protest; postmodernism; political protest; activism; the 'Popular'; digital culture

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### Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

### Author Information

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