

Communicative hegemony and counter-hegemony in the 2024 Barcelona America's Cup

Hegemonía y contrahegemonía comunicativa en la Copa América de vela Barcelona 2024

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This article analyzes hegemonic disputes over the 2024 America's Cup in Barcelona. Drawing on a Gramscian theoretical framework and qualitative dialectical method, it critically evaluates the political-communicative praxis of the No a la Copa América platform across four dimensions: common sense, collective will, material praxis, and scalar articulation. The findings reveal that the movement eroded the mega-event's legitimacy by prioritizing physical co-presence and building a local-popular identity. However, the limits of its territorial retreat in the face of global capital are evident.

KEYWORDS: Hegemony, counterhegemony, Gramsci, social movements, activism.

Este artículo analiza la disputa hegemónica en la Copa América de vela Barcelona 2024. Desde un marco teórico gramsciano y un método cualitativo dialéctico, se evalúa críticamente la praxis político-comunicativa de la plataforma No a la Copa América en cuatro dimensiones: sentido común, voluntad colectiva, praxis material y articulación escalar. Los hallazgos revelan que el movimiento erosiona la legitimidad del megaevento priorizando la copresencia física y construyendo una identidad local-popular. Sin embargo, se evidencia el límite de su repliegue territorial frente al gran capital global.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Hegemonía, contrahegemonía, Gramsci, movimientos sociales, activismo.

Este artigo analisa a disputa hegemônica na Copa América de Vela de Barcelona 2024. A partir de um marco teórico gramsciano e de um método qualitativo dialético, avalia-se criticamente a práxis político-comunicativa da plataforma "Não à Copa América" em quatro dimensões: senso comum, vontade coletiva, práxis material e articulação escalar. Os resultados revelam que o movimento corrói a legitimidade do megaevento, priorizando a copresença física e construindo uma identidade local-popular. No entanto, fica evidente o limite de seu recuo territorial diante do grande capital global.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Hegemonia, contra-hegemonia, Gramsci, movimentos sociais, ativismo.

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INTRODUCTION

The America's Cup in Barcelona in 2024 –officially, the Louis Vuitton Cup– was a sailing regatta presented by its organizers, participants, sponsors, and promoters as an event highly beneficial to society and the environment. However, activists from the No a la Copa Amèrica platform (platform Against the America's Cup) opposed it, arguing that it contravened the rights of the local population and negatively affected the climate and the environment.

This article has two interrelated objectives: at an empirical level, to critically evaluate the impact, scope, and limitations of the platform's political-communicative praxis against institutional narratives; at a theoretical level, to examine how the No a la Copa Amèrica platform's dynamics of resistance confirm, strain, or nuance Antonio Gramsci's propositions re hegemony.

Given the importance of the regatta as an elite economic event and the substantive social mobilization against it, our research addresses a paradigmatic case of struggle for hegemony. Struggles surrounding professional sport as a contested space are not common in research on activism and social movements. However, due to their social relevance and media impact, they can become important catalysts for significant social change (Cassidy, 2016; King, 2008; Rowe & Boyle, 2021). Evaluating the impact and limits of the platform provides valuable theoretical lessons not only for future regattas and other sporting mega-events, but, in general terms, for social movements opposed to the power of big capital in alliance with the state.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Gramsci (2016), the key to social reproduction and change lies in hegemony. In every society, a hegemonic bloc enjoys social legitimacy. A counter-hegemonic bloc seeks to create a new hegemony. To achieve their goal, counter-hegemonic movements or blocs must connect with the prevailing common sense of a society, not simply oppose it head-on, but work through it, from within. Gramsci starts from the idea that common sense is contradictory: it combines elements of hegemonic

ideology with popular experiences and knowledges that can possess transformative potential. The role he assigns to the alternative bloc is to connect with that common sense, broaden it, and elevate it toward a critical consciousness or good sense, toward “a superior conception of life” (p. 73). According to Gramsci, the development of a new hegemony involves the shaping of a national-popular collective will, imbued with critique. To this end, intellectuals and communication play a central role.

According to Gramsci, the socio-historical structures of capitalism, the class factor, and the praxis that allows for the material appropriation of the world are fundamental elements in the construction of counter-hegemony (Sierra Caballero, 2020; Villacañas & Garrido, 2022). Faced with the partial, reductionist, and mechanistic perspectives of culturalism and vulgar materialism, Gramsci adopts a dialectical approach that pays attention to the interrelationship between communication, social action, and economics, based on the concept of relative or partial autonomy (Jones, 2007). The social system offers conditions that establish limits and possibilities for communicative and sociopolitical action, which enjoy a certain leeway to exercise freedom and attempt to transform prevailing circumstances. Thus, it is possible to pay attention to economics, politics, and culture simultaneously (Miller, 2011). In this way, assumptions of the omnipotence of discursive and political agency and economic determinism are avoided.

More recently, Gramscian work developed within the framework of globalization has argued that counter-hegemonic blocs must rearticulate forms of common sense within global relations (Morton, 2007), but always from particular cultural and anthropological contexts (Crehan, 2002). In this sense, the work of Wallerstein (1991) is fundamental; he argues that the analysis of the role of culture must start from the world-system. Hegemonic actors in the world-system use geoculture (especially neoliberalism) to gain legitimacy, while the weak resort to their own cultures to resist. Global power structures determine local possibilities, but local actions can reconfigure global dynamics when they fulfill one requirement: demanding systemic solutions that transcend national borders. Hence, social transformation requires combining local/national perspectives with the global. This is the task for anti-systemic movements that challenge planetary capitalist logic.

This need to study cultures within the framework of the world-system has been highlighted by multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995). Likewise, it constitutes a fundamental axis of the Marxist critique of political economy (Ruiz Sanjuán, 2019) and the political economy of communication (Sánchez-Ruiz, 2024), focused on historical-structural analysis from a dialectical perspective. The work of Mattelart (1998) shows that the commercial globalization of communication has facilitated the globalization of capitalism by unifying transnational flows, but a contestatory and emancipatory communication has also developed that seeks to dismantle media and capitalist domination, using the word as a tool of liberation to build communities through collective action and cultural diversity; world-communication and the world-system are inseparable.

Based on that discussion, this article operationalizes the Gramscian framework through an analytical matrix structured around four fundamental dimensions of a case study: 1) the discursive dispute over common sense, where institutional narratives of the business-city clash with local popular knowledge and critical research and information. This section includes a discussion of the role of academia and the media, two spaces considered crucial in the Gramscian approach; 2) the shaping of the collective will, analyzing how the platform amalgamates heterogeneous demands from diverse grassroots collectives; 3) material-spatial praxis, observing direct actions in the urban and institutional environment; and 4) the articulation between the local and the global in terms of the conflict between transnational elites and urban opposition, taking into consideration the platform's capacity to drive global systemic resistance. This four-dimensional matrix systematically links empirical evidence of the mega-event with Gramscian theory.

METHOD

To provide traceability and rigor in its methodological design, this research adopts a qualitative approach that operationalizes dialectical analysis through a structured examination of four pre-defined theoretical dimensions (common sense, formation of collective will, material-spatial praxis, and scalar relations). This allows us to identify

empirically both the construction of hegemony in corporate-institutional legitimization discourses and counter-hegemony's collective contestation.

The study ranges from October 2023 (the public articulation of the platform's creation) to March 2025 (publication of official post-event technical and economic balances). Within this timeframe, we set up a diversified corpus classified into four categories of sources:

- Materials of hegemony: official press releases from the America's Cup organization, the Fundació Barcelona Capital Nàutica, and the Port de Barcelona, complemented by institutional statements from the Ajuntament de Barcelona (Barcelona City Council) and the Generalitat de Catalunya. Materials referring to the history of the regatta are also included, as they detail the long process of constructing hegemony.
- Materials of counter-hegemony: the documentary archive indexed on the official website of the No a la Copa Amèrica platform, public manifestos, press releases, and a selected sample of 50 posts on its digital social media accounts (X and Instagram).
- Academic and technical discourses: economic evaluation reports from the Universitat de Barcelona, contrasted with critical scientific literature on the legacy of previous editions of the event.
- Media coverage: a dossier of 45 news items from left-leaning media (*Directa*, *VilaWeb*, *Izquierda Diario*), the local public channel (Betevé), and generalist and sports commercial press outlets (*La Vanguardia*, *El Periódico*, *Público*, *El Confidencial*, *Marca*).

Selection criteria for the corpus prioritized materials directly addressing key axes of debate: budgetary impact, urban sovereignty, community livability, and ecological footprint. Validation of the sample was performed through a source triangulation strategy, systematically confronting institutional projections with platform records, academic studies, and media coverage. Certain intrinsic biases in the sample are acknowledged, linked to the higher density of digital materials produced by organized actors compared to the difficulty of recording the oral narratives of unorganized residents. This bias was mitigated by

analyzing popular slogans and spontaneous demonstrations recorded in local journalistic chronicles. Data were subjected to critical analysis combined with documentary reconstruction, organizing findings according to the four-dimensional matrix to evaluate whether the case confirms, nuances, or strains Gramscian theory.

ANALYSIS

Dimension 1: Struggle for common sense between the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic blocs

The hegemonic bloc and the construction of common sense regarding the America's Cup as a common benefit and environmental sustainability

The analysis of the history and structure of the sailing America's Cup shows a long process constructing a common sense by global elites of the Cup as an elite event for demonstrating power until the end of the 1980s; and, from then on, also oriented toward the common good and environmental protection. This institutional discourse operates as an attempt to establish an ideological hegemony that equates the interests of corporate capital with the general well-being of citizens.

The Cup began in 1851 as a competition between British and US yacht squadrons, right at the end of the "age of sail" (Gaynor, 2013). It was the first modern international sporting event, conceived as "a showcase of maritime supremacy, a demonstration of how invincible British dominance over the seas was" (Broughton, 2024).

The Cup began to expand and significantly increase its funding from the 1980s, when competitors "turned to the sages of Madison Avenue for marketing" and "Wall Street for money" (Fuller, 1985, n.p.). Tycoon Alan Bond, whose Fremantle team won in 1983, described the event as "the place where very successful men meet with other very successful men" (as cited in "Fremantle Prepares", 1985, n.p.). Michael Fay, head of a yachting consortium in the 1980s, said: "I haven't come here to win the America's Cup ... I've come to win the America's Cup industry" (as cited in Barrass, 2015, n.p.).

Shortly thereafter, it was given a global imprint that would supposedly benefit host cities. In 1987, the WA Maritime Museum of Western Australia declared that (the city of) "Fremantle became the

center of the universe”, as “restaurants filled with customers from all over the world”, transforming “a quiet port town into a dynamic and cosmopolitan destination” (Meager & WA Maritime Museum, 2023, n.p.). Marketing and public relations were refined to justify the event on the basis of the common good. Reaganite trickle-down economics discourse argued that money from big capital filtered down to the popular classes.

In the 21st century, the city of València (original in Catalan-Valencian) hosted the 2007 and 2010 Cup. The city’s mayor, Rita Barberá, stated that the Cup would “put Valencia on the map” at “no cost to the public purse” (as cited in Canela, 2022, n.p.). Organizers decided to expand the event, “allowing partners to obtain a better, faster, and more regular return on their investments” and guaranteeing the creation of “a city of knowledge” (as cited in Jacopin, 2007, p. 64). The administration turned heavily to mega-events as a response to the deindustrialization and political-economic centralization that had accompanied Spain’s accession to the European Union (Rius-Ulldemolins et al., 2021).

Using Deleuzian language to recycle Reaganomic ideology, Port de Barcelona declared the regatta “an event with great capillarity” (Port de Barcelona, 2024, n.p.), backed by Turisme de Barcelona on the premise that “people who follow the America’s Cup love the sea and have high spending power” (as cited in Burgen, 2024, n.p.).

Municipal representatives and private news media emphasized that holding the Cup in 2024 would generate “1.2 billion euros and 19,000 jobs”, equivalent to 0.5 % of Catalunya’s GDP (Alcalá, 2024, n.p.; “Copa América: Barcelona espera”, 2024, n.p.). The organization also promised the event would generate employment, though it soon celebrated having 2 100 volunteers (Wheatley, 2024). The President of the Generalitat, Pere Aragonès, affirmed that the Cup would be “the best in history”, just as Barcelona in 1992 represented “a before and after in Olympism” (as cited in López, 2022, n.p.).

Corporate sponsors targeted their products at high-net-worth sectors. Among their target audience were ruling-class sailors, who paid £ 120 million to register for the competition (Bell, 2024) and spectators idling on “superyachts” (Marina Port Vell, n.d.). Among the sponsors were LVMH, Emirates Airlines, Puig (fashion, perfume, and cosmetics), Cupra

(automobiles), Yanmar (diesel machinery), McConaghy (superyachts), and Coca-Cola.

These sponsors, the Ajuntament de Barcelona, local private promoters, the King of Spain, and sports authorities argued that the Cup represented a fundamental boost to the blue economy and environmental sustainability (Port de Barcelona, 2024). After the finals, organizers claimed that “Barcelona welcomed the world with open arms” (Wheatley, 2024, n.p.).

The counter-hegemonic bloc and the construction of common sense regarding the America’s Cup as private enrichment and environmental deterioration

The No a la Copa Amèrica platform has historical precedents of resistance against sports commodification (League of Fans, 2011) and the performative use of ecology (Kay, 2019). In València, for example, the neighborhood fabric of Poblets Marítims suffered displacement and gentrification associated with the 2007 and 2010 editions, articulating resistance against the privatization of public spaces and escalating housing prices (Santamarina Campos & Moncusi Ferré, 2013).

Although the platform did not explicitly reference previous movements like València’s, their discourses overlapped: the platform questioned the regatta by conceptualizing it as a mega-event conceived for the enjoyment of high-spending sectors, orchestrated by a global elite that negatively impacted an urban and environmental fabric previously precarized by mass touristification. According to the platform, actual socioeconomic and environmental consequences differed substantially from governmental and corporate projections. It sought to dismantle the official discourse: “they tell us that the America’s Cup will bring wealth, employment, and prestige to our city. It has never been like that”; they want to “justify large urban projects driven by tourism and construction lobbies” (as cited in Sacristán, 2024, n.p.). The platform criticized public spending allocated to the event –inverted Keynesianism– “taking into account all the social, climate, and environmental problems we are already suffering” (as cited in Vicente, 2023, n.p.). Ultimately, according to the slogan of the last demonstration, “We don’t want any macro-event designed to sell the city as a tourist product” (Prieto, 2024).

To understand the social base in which counter-hegemony can take root, it is necessary to analyze how a mega-event's ecological and urban impacts strain neighborhood fabric. In 2024, Spain recorded historical highs in visitor arrivals (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2025), an economic dynamic generating deep fractures between corporate sector profits and residents' housing costs in dense urban areas (Cañada et al., 2024; YouGov, 2024). In Barcelona, the tens of millions of people visiting the city each year place a strain on its 1.7 million permanent residents, while municipal budgets bear an especially intense burden (Goodman, 2025).

The platform focused its discourse on demonstrating that the America's Cup aggravated existing socio-environmental crises. Denouncing the regatta's ecological footprint, estimated by collectives at 250 000 tons of CO₂ ("La plataforma No", 2023), gained special relevance; it coincided with a period of water restrictions decreed by institutions due to extreme reservoir shortages in Catalunya. While the official narrative promoted sustainability and the blue economy as key pillars of the event's ideological legitimacy (Port de Barcelona, 2024), citizens perceived a flagrant contradiction between resource consumption allocated to elite superyachts and daily limitations imposed on residents' drinking water, which was additionally affected by declining quality that increased illnesses (Benítez-Cano et al., 2024; Forero-Ortiz et al., 2020). Consequently, the environmental dimension served as a unifying element of popular good sense (Gramsci, 2016, p. 73), inextricably linking the ecological defense of the marine environment with the right to urban livability.

This foundation of discontent connects with a two-decade trajectory of mobilizations in Barcelona aimed at contesting the mass touristification model, based on coordinates of distributive justice and class struggle, distancing itself from essentialist stances against visitors *per se* (González-Reverté & Soliguer Guix, 2024).

Although evaluating common sense around the Cup is difficult, the context of water scarcity, growing ecological awareness, and Barcelona's tradition of social movements against mass tourism and for urban livability indicate that the platform's discourse was rooted in a contextual framework that favored connection with broader segments

of society. The next question to settle is whether the platform managed to radicalize common sense, starting with the media and academia, orienting it toward understanding the America's Cup as part of a larger structure and system.

The role of academia and the media: contested spaces

From a Gramscian perspective, academia and the news media constitute key ideological and socialization spaces where common sense is contested and power structures legitimized. Empirical analysis reveals a hegemony of discourses favorable to the Cup, but also that academia and the media are spaces of contestation.

In line with Eagleton's (2024) critical considerations regarding the corporate instrumentalization of technical knowledge, certain academic sectors operate as normative validators of big capital directives: consider the three socioeconomic impact reports commissioned by the Fundació Barcelona Capital Nàutica and produced by the Universitat de Barcelona, which are characterized by methodologies that sidelined variables of social discontent and lacked standardized peer-review mechanisms (Suriñach & Vayá, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c).

Conversely, critical scientific production regarding previous editions of the America's Cup converges with the platform's diagnoses. These studies document that the regatta's financial viability has historically rested on absorbing public treasury resources (Sturm et al., 2021), and that tax burdens far exceed actual returns (Fresh Info, 2021). As a model of capitalist accumulation, the event rests on the revaluation of disused port infrastructure (Lecardane, 2008, p. 110) through private stakeholder management strategies (Jacopin, 2007). Furthermore, the literature highlights its functionality in articulating the class identity of dominant global sectors (Connell, 1984, p. 432) and deploying corporate collusion logics assimilated into Western commercialized sports systems (Riggs, 1986; Ross, 2023). In the case of València, analyses show that local residents were excluded from the neoliberal calculation, inheriting persistent public debt and obsolete architectural structures following the subsequent structural crisis (Lassalle, 2014; Rius-Ullde-molins et al., 2021; Romero Renau & Trudelle, 2011). This logic points back to the concept of business-city (*ciudad-negocio*) coined by Jordi

Borja to designate the fragmentation and alienation of post-Olympic urban legacies (Borja et al., 2003, p. 56).

In the news media, coverage reflected a clear asymmetry. Private media corporations tended to reproduce positive and capillary frames provided by promoters. However, critical discourses gained visibility in Catalan (*Directa*, *VilaWeb*) and Spanish (*Izquierda Diario*) left-wing outlets, as well as on the local public channel Betevé, while less frequently permeating specific sections of generalist newspapers (*El Periódico*, *La Vanguardia*, *Público*, *El Confidencial*, *El Español*) and reports by RTVE, international networks like Deutsche Welle, and economic magazines (*Forbes*). These pieces echoed substantial variables: increased rent burdens, displacement of local economies, and environmental impact. Even high-circulation sports newspapers like *Marca* acknowledged mutual impacts between mass sports practices and climate change (Carreño, 2022), while *Sports Illustrated* problematized the limits of performative environmentalism (“What on Earth”, 2022). However, the dominant tone in commercial media was the rationing of criticism, alternated with institutional advertorial insertions intended to consolidate the Cup’s infrastructural legitimacy (“El Port”, 2024).

Dimension 2: Formation of popular collective will to expand the limits of common sense

In Gramscian terms of alliance building, the Barcelona platform demonstrated a remarkable capacity to rally the collective will by unifying 65 founding collectives and coordinating more than 140 neighborhood, environmentalist, and trade union organizations (“Una plataforma”, 2023). This intersectional, popular approach to the Cup showed the regatta impacted several interrelated social problems. As expressed in the platform’s discourses, the variety of environmental, economic, political, and livability problems stemmed from a specific model. Thus, at protests, thousands chanted and carried banners reading “America’s Cup never again”, “Let’s sink this city model”, “Your regatta doesn’t mean a thing to us”,² “[Mayor] Collboni trickster, give us back our money”, and “Let me reclaim the coast”. They booed tourists and in-

² Literally: “Vuestra regata nos suda la patata”.

sisted that “This is the real Barcelona experience”, “Tourists go home”, and “Your sailboats raise our rent” (“Miles de personas”, 2024).

To connect with broader segments of society, the platform created a website and X and Instagram accounts containing information about the Cup’s impact and protest actions, including text, videos, and posters. Its Instagram presence featured concerts, interviews, panel discussions, images of protests, and *artivism* in various forms, ranging from a parody of officials celebrating the event to a constructivist invitation to gather, blending calls for uncomfortable feminism with popular recclamation of the beach. Platform posters ranged from news photography to futuristic art and graffiti, in a spirit of DIY/bricolage.

A particularly significant finding in unraveling the architecture of this collective will is the reconfiguration of the conflict’s identity scale vis-à-vis traditional local political coordinates. In an autonomous community like Catalunya, where nationalistic currents hold top-tier historical and institutional strength and often monopolize public debate, it means a great deal that the platform avoided such discourses. Instead, the movement shifted the axis of identity affiliation toward a strictly municipal scale, decentralized and anchored in Barcelona’s concrete reality. By projecting the image of a historically open city, popular and cosmopolitan at its core, seeking an alternative tourism and urban model, the platform neutralized the risk of its protests being instrumentalized by institutional identity polarization.

This strategic decision introduces a notable theoretical tension. While Gramsci (2016) argued that building counter-hegemony indispensably required forming a national-popular collective will –in which subaltern classes assume the nation-state’s historical project to endow it with new emancipatory meaning– the platform’s experience propelled a struggle of a strictly local-popular nature. By foregoing sovereignist divisions that chronically fracture the Catalan political map, the movement succeeded in unifying heterogeneous social sectors around a shared agenda. The political efficacy of this articulation lay in its ability to bring visibility to a clearly material and structural problem, beyond identity logics. Thus, the local-popular emerges in this research as a necessary conceptual modulation for understanding contemporary

metropolitan resistance, where the urgency of community material livability displaces nationalistic discourses of identity.

The platform's alliances and discourse reflect its efforts to redefine critical common sense against the Cup as part of a series of problems derived from a neoliberal capitalist model that prioritizes elite economic profit over local populations and the environment. As elaborated in the following section, material-spatial action constituted a fundamental axis of this redefinition.

Dimension 3: Popular praxis for the material appropriation of urban space and institutions

The repertoire of material praxis included non-violent actions integrated into popular cultural dynamics, such as local neighborhood gatherings, demonstrations, and expressions of *activism*. In coastal neighborhoods like Barceloneta, protest was channeled against overcrowding and the prolonged settlement of international teams' operational facilities (Sacristán, 2024). Actions in enclaves such as Somorrostro beach consisted of playful spatial occupations through human chains, community food events, and traditional games (Sacristán, 2024). This redefinition of coastal space made it easier for local residents to grasp intuitively abstract concepts of territorial defense against market privatization.

Concurrently, the platform intervened in the institutional realm. It submitted formal petitions to the Sindicatura de Comptes (Court of Auditors) to audit the financial management of the Fundació Barcelona Capital Nàutica due to alleged discrepancies in audience and impact indicators (Rodríguez, 2024). This demand was escalated to the Parlament de Catalunya after hosting dialogue sessions with representatives of four political parties (“‘No a la Copa América’ pide”, 2024). Furthermore, a complaint was formally filed with the Oficina Antifraude de Catalunya, driven by the opacity of public budgetary flows and contractual clauses, leading to the opening of an inquiry file (Prieto, 2024).

From a Gramscian approach, material and spatial occupation practices rooted in daily life possessed the capacity to redefine coastal space, enabling local residents to intuitively and practically digest abstract concepts of territorial defense against market privatization beyond what mere dissemination of information can accomplish. On

the other hand, institutional action can grant legitimacy to protests and confer greater transformative potential upon them.

Dimension 4: Global lucidity and local retreat in counter-hegemonic articulation

A critical aspect in evaluating the scope of the counter-hegemonic bloc consists of examining the articulation between local and global scales in the platform's political-communicative strategy. Analyzing its manifestos and discursive campaigns reveals a lucid structural diagnosis: the movement does not conceptualize the America's Cup as a strictly municipal issue or an isolated moment of dysfunctional city-hall management. On the contrary, its materials demonstrate a clear understanding of the mega-event as a device fully integrated into the logic of global neoliberal capitalism and the geoculture of the world-system (Wallerstein, 1991). The platform correctly identifies that the local urban fabric is being instrumentalized by transnational corporations, investment funds, and luxury brands as a stage for extracting surplus value and the exclusive enjoyment of global elites.

However, when examining the Gramscian dimension of alliance articulation for building a collective will, a significant paradox emerges: despite the global scale of its diagnosis, the platform's organizational and operational praxis displays a marked retreat toward the local. As well as tracking of its digital communication channels, this documentary corpus reveals a notable absence of organic alliances, stable coordination networks, or joint actions with counterpart social movements outside Catalunya's borders.

This scalar disconnection introduces a primary analytical tension common to contemporary activism. While the platform demonstrated high efficacy in amalgamating dispersed demands into a municipal identity of resistance, its inability to project mobilization toward a transnational anti-systemic network structurally limited its reach against an adversary enjoying broad geographic and financial mobility. While big capital operates fluidly, reticularly, and multi-territorially across world-space, this counter-hegemonic bloc remained constrained by the physical limits of local geography. Such an asymmetry of scales explains the fundamental limit of its political efficacy: even if resistance succeeds

in eroding the legitimacy of the business-city at a specific node, the hegemonic bloc does not dissolve; rather, it simply shifts its extractive device to another geographical coordinate, confirming that a global critique paired with an isolated praxis is vulnerable to being neutralized by the spatial dynamics of contemporary capitalism itself.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that the Barcelona 2024 sailing America's Cup operated as a field of hegemonic dispute between dominant-bloc institutional narratives and the No a la Copa Am rica's practices of resistance. While official discourses attempted to anchor in common sense that the mega-event represented a vector of prosperity and ecological sustainability, the counter-hegemonic bloc highlighted underlying material, environmental, and class contradictions.

Upon the event's conclusion, the platform demanded that future editions of the event be excluded from the city (Prieto, 2024). Subsequently, the Ajuntament de Barcelona announced its resolution not to bid to host the 38th edition. While the platform claimed this decision as a victory for its mobilization, a cautious analytical assessment suggests institutional withdrawal responded to a confluence of factors, where political pressure and attrition generated by neighborhood activism interacted with a lack of consensus over real economic returns and the high budgetary costs demanded by regatta promoters. Thus, the counter-hegemonic bloc's efficacy manifested not omnipotently, but as a veto force and erosion of legitimacy capable of influencing the local administration's cost-benefit calculations.

The experience confirms the Gramscian necessity of linking activist core demands to pre-existing common sense (accumulated discontent over housing crisis, drought restrictions, public spending) and elevating it in an emancipatory direction by shaping a collective will among critical currents and developing structural and systemic understandings.

However, the analysis introduces important nuances and tensions into the Gramscian conceptual framework. First, it strains the assumption held by culturalist currents that hegemonic disputes are decided predominantly on the abstract terrain of discourse. The case study

demonstrates that the platform's momentum stemmed from its capacity to subordinate digital agitation to a material-spatialized praxis (playful beach occupations, neighborhood assemblies, and human chains). This shows that in hyper-digitalized advanced capitalist contexts, physical co-presence and material disruption of urban space remain in dispensable prerequisites for popular good sense to erode the ideological legitimization of elites.

Second, the case nuances the traditional notion regarding the formation of a state-centric national-popular collective will. In a political ecosystem like Catalunya's, heavily structured around nationalist discourses and tensions, the platform eschewed these traditional identity categories. Instead, it advocated for the local-popular, weaving a municipal, urban, cosmopolitan, and intersectional class alliance, suggesting that resistances against big capital's global geoculture can forge solid collective identities from the shared condition of inhabitants affected by city dispossession, dispensing with traditional sovereigntist rhetoric.

However, the case also reveals a structural limitation shared by both classical theory –though corrected by heterodox authors like Wallerstein (1991) and Mattelart (1998)– and movement praxis: the risk of localism. Although the platform succeeded in eroding local institutional consensus and conditioning the city council's withdrawal from future editions, the extractive structures of the world-system operate transnationally and translocally. Barcelona's withdrawal does not halt mega-event logic; it merely shifts it elsewhere, highlighting the imperative need to move toward transnational and translocal globalization and coordination of struggles for the right to the city and ecological justice.

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