Voicing Dissent

American Artists and the War on Iraq

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Bleuwenn Lechaux

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Foreword

In *Voicing Dissent: American Artists and the War on Iraq*, Bleuwenn Lechaux and Violaine Roussel make an important contribution to our understanding of mobilization. Building on and contributing to a most dynamic line of research that has attracted many younger French sociologists, these authors aim to understand the process of engagement, which requires considering the transformation of the subjectivity and identification process of actors, the motivations and tools they draw upon as they enter into contact with new realities, and their connection with more macro cultural repertoires and social movements. This sociology of engagement, inspired by authors such as Norbert Elias, Erving Goffman, and Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, resonates with the American literature on frame alignment and collective mobilization, to the extent that it considers the intersubjective conditions of possibility for social movements. However, the European and American literatures differ in the emphasis they put on the role of material and ideational support for engagement, with European research being more influenced by development in the sociology of science, in which constraints on action generated by (for instance) the material world are more prominently featured. These contributions hint at a first "good reason" for reading this book, one that has to do with the need to develop a more complex theory of how social actors engage the world around them, in part through politics.

A second "good reason" is provided for us by the sheer importance of the topic. Artists of all sorts—writers, movie directors, performers, visual artists—are "interpelated" by (called by) important social stakes. Like many academics and other social activists, they are drawn to their vocation in part because they are moved by a deep desire to represent and influence the direction our societies take. The Iraq War has played a crucial symbolic role in the American and European collective imaginaries over the last several years. Our relationship to it came to stand for our relationship to the world writ large, for whether one values freedom and self-determination over security, an inner-looking or more generous imperial America, etc. Thus it is not surprising that the public drama around the war came to exercise its attraction on so many artists.

In this book, Lechaux and Roussel give them a public voice, while trying to understand how and why they mobilized. Inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's illustrious book *The Weight of the World*, they present iconic figures who reveal to us a broad register of ways of engaging, a repertoire of argument that we could not anticipate beforehand. Thus the reader emerges with a much deeper understanding of the nexus between politics, culture, and human subjectivity. And also, of course, of the topic at hand—how artists tried to make a difference in a very specific episode of contemporary American history. The experience will be enriching and eminently worthwhile. This is why I invite you to spend a few hours with this book. You will not be disappointed.

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Series Editors Preface

There is a long history of political protest in Great Britain, and popular culture, and particularly popular music, has often been at the centre of such dissent.[1] Perhaps its high water mark occurred in the 1980s, with overtly political bands such as Easterhouse,[2] The Redskins,[3] The Style Council[4] and Billy Bragg[5] adopting political causes or aligning themselves with events such as the Miners' Strike. Pop and politics most famously merged with movements such as "Rock against Racism" which sought to unite diverse groups against the rise of the far right; similarly "Red Wedge," which sought to promote the Labour party during the 1987 General Election campaign. Of course there is a long history and tradition of radical folk music in Britain (and beyond), perhaps best epitomised by Ewan Macoll.[6] More recently, artists such as Frank Turner and The King Blues have revived political songs through a fusion of folk, punk and other genres. In terms of contemporary anti-war songs, the most notable British example is *Shipbuilding*, an Elvis Costello/Clive Langer song written for, and released by, Robert Wyatt. The song explored some of the consequences and inherent contradictions related to the Falklands War.

The Iraq War, and protests against it, have been the focus for a number of artists. The playwright David Hare wrote *Stuff Happens* as a "history play" about the run up to the conflict. Perhaps most poignant is the work of artist Steve McQueen, the UK's official war artist who was in Basra for six days during the conflict. Because of the limitations of time and restrictions imposed on him his initial idea to try and make a film about the war fell through, and he was concerned that he had no idea of what he was going to do as his response. Inspiration came in an unlikely form. Whilst sticking a stamp on his tax return, the result was *For Queen and Country*:

> McQueen has used a large oak cabinet with sliding vertical drawers to present 98 sheets of postage stamps. Each sheet depicts a different member of the armed services who has died in the conflict, and each sheet tells us who is depicted, and when they died. The sheets are presented in the chronological order of the deaths.[7]

McQueen also campaigned, without success, for these "stamps" to be considered and used as designs for a real set of stamps, but it is a prominent example of the war providing a focus for a moving piece of artwork. A further interesting relationship between art, politics and war is illustrated by the case of Brian Haws, a peace protester who began his demonstration outside the Houses of Parliament in London in June 2001 as a response to the economic sanctions imposed upon Iraq.[8] The initial protest was small scale, but over time this grew substantially and acted as a poignant reminder to the passing Members of Parliament of wider disquiet and objection to the war. To deal with protests outside Parliament, the Government, in 2005, passed the *Serious Organised Crime and Police Act*, s132, (1) of which provided for demonstrating without authorisation in a designated area:

> Any person who—
>
> (a) organises a demonstration in a public place in the designated area, or
> (b) takes part in a demonstration in a public place in the designated area, or
> (c) carries on a demonstration by himself in a public place in the designated area,
>
> is guilty of an offence if, when the demonstration starts, authorisation for the demonstration has not been given under s134(2).

The designated area was defined under s138 as being within 1km of Parliament Square; the site of Brian Haw's protest. The legal and political debate about issues such as the lawfulness of such limitations and the retrospective nature has raged since.[9] In 2007, the acclaimed artist Mark Wallinger recreated Brian Haw's protest from Parliament Square at Tate Britain.[10] His work *State Britain 2007* recreated Haw's protest with every banner, flag and painting that formed part of the original protest being reproduced faithfully. Playing upon the position of Tate Britain, located in nearby Pimlico close to the Houses of Parliament, a line was drawn on the floor to show where the exclusion zone fell and the installation was positioned to straddle this border. Wallis noted that this very positioning was a political gesture: "*State Britain's* unique physical position is thus politically charged, and suggests that the physical, social and intellectual space of the museum is both contested and free."[11]

The politics of war, and the documenting of war and its consequences, have provided a fertile source for artists. *Voicing Dissent* represents a new and innovative approach to develop our understanding of the relationship between art, artists and political protest. The key to developing our comprehension of this often sophisticated connection is contained within the words of the artists themselves. Lechaux and Roussel have painstakingly gathered these through 170 interviews with a variety of artists.[12] Essentially,

this is the artists' story of their mobilisation and commitment to the anti-war cause. When this is coupled with the application of sociological theory we can begin to comprehend motivations and activities from both a practical and theoretical perspective:

> Our work as sociologists is precisely to provide these guidelines with which to decipher what is at stake in each interview: artists came to meet us with their specific viewpoint, a social and professional position structuring their representation of the situation, of the war and its implications, of other protagonists (including politicians, activists and their colleagues in the art worlds), of the risk they might take by making an anti-war statement and sometimes by creating anti-war art, of their identity as an artist, a citizen and a human being.[13]

One crucial point that is expertly teased out is the relationship of the artist as individual to the artist as professional and how this relationship is managed. As Lechaux and Roussel note, the tension between art and politics is potentially a fraught one that involves both potential concessions and problems:

> As a result, making "political art" seems to be a gamble and comes with contradictions. To be an artist and, at the same time, to stand up for a political cause requires management of these tensions and contradictions. Interviews show that, at a general level, the risks of (overtly) fusing art and politics are feared by creators who expect some recognition in an art field; being labeled as an "activist-artist" proves to be a stigma.[14]

Whilst this is a book about American artists and the extent to which there is a unified set of values and approaches is a key point, it raises a far broader theoretical perspective around art, artists and protest. As the overt military involvement in Iraq draws towards a close this is a timely book that shines light on one aspect of the war through the voices of one section of the community. Reading this book enables us to listen to these voices and reflect through the authors' analysis what the words from these voices may mean.

Steve Greenfield
Guy Osborn

Introduction

Many lines have already been written regarding the recent war in Iraq. Fewer texts have turned the spotlight on American artists and their contribution to this specific anti-war movement. Among them, we find, on one hand, books and papers directly written by the participants, mostly engaged accounts aimed at creating and sustaining the debate about the legitimacy of the war,[1] and, on the other hand, a few academic analyses explaining the activities related to the war, including anti-war initiatives of artists.[2] Insiders' views without distance towards the situation contrast with scientific pretensions to objectivity.

Our ambition with this book is clearly to subvert this partition by using *artists' experiences in their own words* as a precious material to provide access to the meaning(s) of the mobilization. Following the example of Pierre Bourdieu, who gave priority to social agents' discourses in his book of interviews, *The Weight of the World*,[3] we would like to take artists' words seriously and to listen carefully to what they said when we interviewed them about their anti-war commitment. In that sense, comprehensive sociology is one of the major scientific grounds of our reasoning. Using sociological interviews to test their hypotheses and illustrate their findings, social scientists (including ourselves in other publications)—as a normal part of their work—make drastic choices and cuts as they turn people's voices into selected empirical data. Instead, we have made the choice to allow the people we have interviewed to speak and to give them more space than sociologists would usually do.

Doing so does not result so much from our will to pay homage to them or to suggest that they are not heard enough (since some of them benefit from a large public exposure). It originates in a sociological project: giving artists more room to speak out in the book directly derives from our perspective, connecting the intelligibility of action and discourses to the understanding of local situations in which activities develop. By unveiling these conditions and configurations of perception/action in the interviews, artists progressively give us clues to understand the specificities of their anti-war commitment. Why (and how) does a television actress who was never political before suddenly become an anti-war visible activist? Why do artists sometimes opt

for the creation of "anti-war art," whereas other artists completely exclude such a fusion between art and activism? Why do some of them fear to express their political opinions and why are they convinced that they will pay a high price for their commitment, when some others do not? To decipher such enigmas (and many others), one still needs sociological tools, which we provide in brief introductions to the actors' words. Before presenting the anti-war artists we have interviewed and the lessons learned from what they said, we need to set out the main lines of our approach and the reasons why the need for/relevance of such a book appeared precisely as we were analyzing artists' mobilization against the war in Iraq.

THE SOCIOLOGICAL RELEVANCE OF ARTISTS' SPEECH

Some facts must be kept in mind to fully understand the following pages. The mobilization against a possible war in Iraq began in the summer of 2002, and more concretely in the fall of 2002, in the USA. Special organizations were created to face the political situation of a foreseeable attack. The *Not In Our Name* group initiated the first petition signed by a large number of public figures. A coalition called *Win Without War* was created to unify the action of several existing feminist, anti-racist, and pacifist organizations. Preexisting organizations, such as the radical left group *Refuse and Resist*, mobilized their Artists' Network on this issue. One of the main tools chosen by the activists against the war was the electronic petition, through "MoveOn.org" for instance. Using the same means, the film director Robert Greenwald and the actor Mike Farrell wrote in December 2002 a petition letter to the then President George W. Bush, and obtained the signatures of many Hollywood celebrities, mainly actors, calling themselves *Artists United to Win Without War*. This moment was a turning point in the artists' mobilization. It generated a successful model of action used by other informal groups of artists or entertainment figures, for example, *Musicians United to Win Without War* or *Theaters Against War*, and other groups of painters, sculptors, draftsmen, and others. The chronology of the mobilizations proves to be important, insofar as the success of initiatives led to the appropriation of similar modes of action by individuals more recently involved, and contributed to the further development of the movement. After the war officially ended (May 2003), and even after the end of the American occupation in Iraq (June 2004), some artists were still mobilized, trying to substitute their own reading of the events for the governmental chronology of the war. But when the presidential election came closer, most of them redefined their priority and focused on the electoral campaign, supporting the Democratic Party. Anti-war protests changed into an unprecedented involvement in the political campaign, especially on the part of Hollywood celebrities.

The artists involved came from various professions and the anti-war

commitments had, in fact, various meanings in relation to heterogeneous levels of politicization. Some of the artists were already known for their political commitment, but a large number of people were not accustomed to participation in political causes. On the basis of the sociological interviews conducted, we have drawn *three ideal-typical paths* followed by anti-war artists[4]:

The "pioneers": The first group brings together theatre, graphic, installation and street artists, and some musicians (mostly from the hip hop scene—like Ozomatli—and political musicians and performers—for example, David Rovics or Steve Earle) who have defined themselves as "political artists" for a long time. They have had previous and repeated contacts with the organizations of the radical (and sometimes Marxist) left and cooperated with them on a regular basis. They share a practical and more theoretical knowledge about activism that they can use in their anti-war action. Most of them also have specific characteristics regarding their social background (they were socialized in a politicized family, for example) and their education (high level of diploma; high level of cultural capital). They display a social ability to talk about politics using the same categories and language as politicians, in a clear, articulated and sophisticated political discourse, here regarding the war. All of which amounts to what the Bourdieusian school calls a "political competence." They often combined the expression of their political feelings in their artwork with participation in demonstrations and other forms of collective action. Their mobilization against the war was the continuation of previous political statements and did not stop (or decrease) with the official end of the conflict. Robbie Conal, a graphic artist who started the "guerrilla postering" movement in Los Angeles, is a typical figure of this group.

The "white knights": The second set of trajectories gathers celebrities who used their visibility to define themselves publicly as spokespersons of the protest. They did not join larger groups or organizations but always acted as individuals. They spoke out in an isolated way, in the name of a direct relationship with a large audience, and endorsed a heroic individual role, defined as independent from political games. Whether they had already promoted causes in the past or experience here their first real political commitment, they continuously refer to this image of the "white knight" of a cause. Michael Moore—who was politically active decades before he became a celebrity—or Sean Penn, despite different trajectories, may belong to this category. A connection between the political statements and the profession always exists for the people of that group: either because their political stand carries unexpected consequences for their job, or because they give a political meaning to their professional choices.

The "public leaders": As a result of its access to the news media, the last

group quickly became the most visible: some people in the film and entertainment industries participated in specific anti-war organizations and sometimes had, in this context, their first experience of political commitment. Members of this group often describe their involvement as emotional and related to ethical motives and a moral reprobation, rather than associated with a sophisticated knowledge about international and domestic politics and the rules of the political game. The members of this group have heterogeneous profiles. Most of them developed a very ephemeral involvement, often limited to the signing of a petition. The others had a longer and stronger commitment (actors Tim Robbins, Susan Sarandon or Janeane Garofalo are good examples) and their anti-war activity turned into an involvement in the electoral campaign. Some graphic and theatre artists, writers or musicians who expressed opinions without making political art belong to this category too. They all have in common an effort to separate strictly their professional activities from their political actions. They gathered in specific organizations (like *Artists United to Win Without War*) created in this context and that were exclusively anti-war. At several levels this group gives a public identity to the movement, as the members of this group capture the attention of the news media and their strategies focus mostly on being in the press.

Whereas the "pioneers" had launched the movement in connection with more grassroots political organizations, the rise of the other groups overshadowed them. The activist work was distributed so that Hollywood celebrities rapidly endorsed this role of being the *leaders* of the mobilization in the eyes of other protagonists. This leadership refers to their own beliefs regarding their power to change the situation, and to the fact that they become a reference to evaluate the success of the movement and its potential development for other artists, politicians and journalists.

"An Anti-War Movement of Artists"

This anti-war activism of celebrities—including mostly film actors and directors, popular musicians, and more rarely theatre and visual artists—is, in fact, often what the press and the news media refer to as "the" artists' movement. Using this singular ("the movement") and generalizing from specific examples, they contribute to symbolically construct the mobilization as a unified whole.[5] The heterogeneity of the art professions at stake and the complexity of situations, depending on someone's position in a particular art field and on his/her past relation to politics and activism, vanish when journalists depict anti-war artists as a coherent group, moving simultaneously in the same direction. Regardless of their intentions (this symbolic unification may reinforce the public credibility of the movement and its strength, or it may be used to stigmatize artists' and intellectuals' ideology and their lack of flexibility), by so doing, journalists cover up the real

diversity of actors and practices, temporalities and dynamics, perceptions of the situation and social effects of mobilizations. In fact, "the" artists' movement is closer to being a patchwork made of diverse representations and types of involvement. The forms of commitment, their meaning, intensity and expected results are differentiated with respect to the category of art profession observed and the level of politicization and familiarity with activist groups specific to a given artist prior to the anti-war mobilization.

Although "the anti-war movement of artists" as we perceive it through the media is a symbolic construct, this does not make it unreal: first, the production of these public images is a collective product, deriving mostly from the activities of journalists and activists (including artists) who are contributing—for heterogeneous reasons—to the circulation of a unified vision of the protest. Activists are aware that giving such a coherent public representation is likely to reinforce the mobilization's legitimacy and the strength of the movement in the eyes of other protagonists (politicians, especially), and they consistently work to organize and publicize salient moments of unification: national and international days of marches and protest, giant concerts against the war, extended petitions online and very general web pages (aggregating anti-war groups and individuals)[6] embody for the press and for a larger audience the extension and the greatness of "the movement."

Second, even though the marches, for instance, always attract diverse types of protesters and differ from one place to another, the expression of the public unity of the movement is meaningful for most of the protagonists, and the committed artists—like others—may refer to these symbolic events as focal points,[7] with which to evaluate the success of the contestation and the foreseeable future of the movement, and to coordinate their initiatives with their counterparts' action in the mobilizations. Rather than denunciating the fake nature of "the" mobilization, we would like to point here to the double reality of an "international movement." There might be nothing like *a* transnational cohesive and homogeneous network of artists at work— nothing other than symbolic—but symbolic here is everything: defining what they are fighting for as a *transnational cause*, they collectively build and transfer/appropriate this public identity, with powerful social effects of legitimization.[8] The discourses shaping the cause artists are involved in and the construction of unity through the use of common designations have performative consequences, generating actions and the belief that "things can change."

Focusing on American artists among the anti-war protesters means selecting a definite part of the whole picture and following the specific dynamics of those groups within "the movement." This is not the place to give further details regarding the logics of commitment of different types of artists and the transformations originating in the (late but) massive involvement of celebrities (reframing artists' participation and its public meanings).[9] Through the interviews below and their introductions, we will expose

different moments of the dynamics and a variety of positions and situations for involved artists. By so doing, we intend to show the real heterogeneity of configurations leading to an anti-war commitment, as well as the consequences of the implication in collective action. One needs to keep in mind that the people we have interviewed all share a self-identification as artists: in their anti-war activities, they refer simultaneously to political and artistic "agendas" even when they dissociate these two activities from each other. As we will see, their specific professional environment remains highly decisive as they mobilize against the war. Simultaneously, the political time and critical moments become crucial even to those who were not initially accustomed to activism. They not only react to the official history of the war produced in this context. Their (activist and sometimes artistic) activity is often affected and reoriented by major political stakes, like the presidential elections of 2004. We will explore the politicization of those artists in the light of political/activist mechanisms as well as occupational constraints and logics.

Between Sociologists and Social Actors: "Giving a Voice"

Why do we need to do it through the restitution of artists' commitment *in their own words*?

An easy answer would be that such a requirement originates—first of all—in the expectations of social actors: the people we have interviewed often confessed that they agreed to talk to us in order to get a *public voice, without distortion*, through the interview. They implicitly referred to a vision of academic and sociological work allowing them to rely on us for an *authentic* diffusion of their views and feelings. Indeed, most of the time, social actors count on this kind of "tacit contract" between the sociologist and the interviewees that they may formulate in terms of "trust".[10] But being trustworthy for a sociologist is not exactly a matter of person or interindividual relationships: the institutional authority of a position embodied by the sociologist is the major source of reliability. As a result, interviewing artists—and especially artists who think of themselves as educated, progressive and open-minded, politically conscious (sometimes leftist and activist) people/professionals—makes a difference: they are more likely to value social sciences and intellectual work, to have a positive views of academics in this context, and to anticipate certain affinities of perception with the interviewer (including political ones). The relationship was all the more conceived in terms of proximity as France was perceived by most of our interviewees as a country where artists and intellectuals enjoy great recognition, whether in terms of legitimization by critics and "public opinion," or of social and economic rights. Whether these considerations were grounded in myth or in fact, they were probably not devoid of positive effects on the interviewee/interviewer social relation.

Such a configuration made it possible for us to conduct 170 interviews with artists in various art professions, to record these conversations (generally

lasting from one to two hours), to meet the same artists twice or three times in some cases, to obtain new contacts from the interviewees, to remain completely free to use the interviews as we would choose in our own work. If this kind of silent and objective complicity that artists often expect greatly facilitates contacts and discussions, it also produces obligations for the sociologist: we think that it not only means conforming to a certain professional ethics and, for instance, genuinely presenting the type of analysis that we are conducting, but it also implies thinking back on this experience, including it in our subject and respecting as far as possible what was at stake for social actors in our interactions.

For some of them, who have wide access to public spaces and to the (mass) media, understanding why they decided to share their anti-war feelings and actions with us, when there are so many places where they could (and often did) speak out, is not that obvious. Nevertheless, they spontaneously revealed their ambiguous relation to the press and the media. This phenomenon has been analyzed before in reference to various situations: they simultaneously depend on journalistic arenas where they fight to be admitted, and they often feel suspicious and betrayed by the press. As a matter of fact, speaking out in the media has nothing in common with getting involved in any ordinary conversation; it is, rather, an institutionalized form of confession framed by specific norms, routines and rules (just as confession follows rules in church or in court).[11] The nature of these rules varies from one media arena to another,[12] and, even though some artists and celebrities have to some extent become experts in the art of playing with the media rules, they know that their initial intentions and strategies will be "filtered" and formatted according to journalistic logics and priorities. In the sociological interview, in contrast, the forms and limits (in time, especially) of the interaction are more flexible, and the experience is guaranteed to be harmless for the interviewee, so that the "confession" resembles more a "confidence." At the same time, as we will see, the presence of the sociologist in front of anti-war artists here is not without effect, and it differs from a dialog with a friend or a monolog.

For artists who do not have easy access to the public sphere and the media, talking to the sociologist is often a way to have a public voice, through the sociologist's words. Younger and non established creators and/or those in marginal art sectors (graphic and street artists, for instance) may try to use this mediation to give some echo to their anti-war involvement: becoming visible can even be a condition to simply *exist* as an activist, and sometimes as an artist as well (when they create anti-war art). This type of artist struggles to be recognized and taken seriously as a useful "whistle-blower"[13]: denunciating the dangers and harmful effects associated with this war, he/she tries to influence others' (and especially social authorities') behaviors and to launch the mobilization on a larger scale. Indeed, his/her role can be compared to the activities of scientists, journalists and others who revealed new risks for public health and security and initiated what has

been analyzed as a "whistle-blowing process." Such artists also intend to participate in the creation of a public controversy, here regarding the legitimacy of the war: finding forums where they could be heard is synonymous with their activity.

As a result, while talking to us during the interviews, they are still giving reality and effect to their anti-war commitment; as such, it should be included in the practices that we analyze to explain their political behaviors and not only be considered as a "tool" for research providing us with evidence of other activities. For this reason, among others, taking the artists' word seriously and restituting large sections of it—as we do in this book—is fully meaningful sociologically. We are in possession of a precious material to share with other scholars and with any reader interested in artists' activism. The interviews express their anti-war initiatives as much as they unveil the conditions, logics and effects of past actions: we will see in detail how they reveal struggles, unequal power confrontations, feelings of exclusion, dispossession, rage, frustration, unfairness, and so on. As in Pierre Bourdieu's *Weight of the World*,[14] which has inspired the format of this book, the artists—despite the heterogeneity of their situations and the fact that some of them are wealthy and professionally successful—draw progressively, in the course of the interviews, the lines of domination mechanisms of various types (which we will underline). They show the suffering and discouragement that may result from such mechanisms: some of them have expressed their deep feeling of helplessness regarding the country's political fate and the marginalization of their role as a citizen after George Bush's reelection in 2004, and they have hesitated between "exit" and "voice" strategies afterwards, looking for new reasons to remain vocal.[15] The feeling of "being nothing" politically speaking is often related to feelings of professional powerlessness and fragility, and the conviction of a lack of social recognition and valorization of their artistic activity/identity. Besides mechanisms of domination and relegation outside of the realm of political effectiveness, similar experiences sometimes derive from different causes: the consolidation of the social boundary separating the artistic worlds and the political profession (reserved to specialists) generates the rise of new questions regarding the traditional "mission of the artist in society," that some interviewees had in mind.

To fully seize what is at stake in terms of redefinition of civic roles and professional models when artists think that protesting and sending warnings regarding the war is their responsibility (and is in their power) as they are artists, leaving space for the actors' voice is necessary. They show how they challenge social frontiers by promoting new symbolic boundaries.[16]

The Need for Sociological Keys

Going beyond the simple recollection of artists' feelings and our spontaneous empathy/antipathy toward them requires us to mobilize sociological

tools, to understand why some of them thought they had been/were able to influence the political game and stop the war and felt defeated, whereas others found themselves, instead, in the middle of what they perceive as the growing renewal of political art regardless of the electoral result of 2004. Our work as sociologists is precisely to provide these guidelines with which to decipher what is at stake in each interview: artists came to meet us with their specific viewpoint, a social and professional position structuring their representation of the situation, of the war and its implications, of other protagonists (including politicians, activists and their colleagues in the art worlds), of the risk they might take by making an anti-war statement and sometimes by creating anti-war art, of their identity as an artist, a citizen and a human being.

Interviews (like any material used as a basis for sociological analysis[17]) are far from being made of "pure/objective facts": in brief introductions, we will give the reader the most important and appropriate tools not to mis-read and misunderstand the artists' words, but also to use each interview as a piece in a puzzle forming the larger picture of the mobilization system, including artists' commitments. Artists' practices and discourses may respond to one another and make sense *relationally*, because some of them interact directly, or simply because they refer to others' initiatives, and adjust their own behaviors to the obstacles that other protagonists face, or to their success in opening new directions for action. Artists' anti-war mobilizations not only agglomerate singular and isolated decisions, they form an embedded system of interdependent activities, connected to the practices of social actors in other spheres (the field of political and social movements, the journalistic field . . .) as well. The extracts that we have selected from the totality of the interviews are especially significant at a double level: on one hand, they reflect the conditions and logics of an anti-war involvement, in a given local situation and in a specific art (sub-)field. On the other hand, they reveal the modes of insertion of different types of commitment in the protest as a whole: how artists define possibilities for action, good forms and moments to mobilize in reference to what they perceive of what happens to other participants elsewhere. The public attacks against the Dixie Chicks, Sean Penn's declaration about the attempt to "blacklist" him in the film industry after he revealed himself as a "hero" of the anti-war cause, for instance, had obvious effects on other artists' strategies, on the adoption of precautionary behaviors and very limited forms of action in some cases.

The material from which we have made the selection is made up of 170 interviews with various types of art professionals: we have not discriminated on the basis of our own judgment and taste between "real" artists and artworks and "fake" ones, classifying "popular art" or "entertainment," as well as "street art," in the second category. Instead of establishing hierarch-ies and excluding certain protagonists from our study, substituting what we call "art" and "an artist" for the participants' views, we wanted to be as

non-normative as possible to include in our analysis the various kinds of social actors concretely at work. We have taken seriously all of those who called themselves "artists" and became committed against the war as such. They were painters, draftsmen, visual and installation artists, graphic and street artists, theatre or film actors and directors, playwrights, musicians, poets. Their modes of involvement were eclectic as well: some of them tried to reconcile their political beliefs and intentions and their professional practices by creating and circulating "anti-war art," while other kept (sometimes very strictly) separate their everyday occupation, carried out as "business as usual," and their activism against the war (participating in marches, rallies and events, taking public stands . . .). They became active at different moments of the protest, and the interviews—conducted between 2004 and 2009—captured various states of the artists' mobilization. Being a "pioneer of the movement" was at the same time more uncertain and more unpopular than committing oneself when the war was already seen as a bad political choice and a dead-end strategy by a large percentage of the population (reflected in opinion polls). The places where we recruited our interviewees are not completely neutral: the discussions took place in Los Angeles and New York, both cities where anti-war and anti-Bush opinions are not necessarily a minority choice. Differences between these two localities and their effects on anti-war commitments are explored through the interviews. If the artists sometimes confess their fear of being stigmatized because of their activism, they were probably not as isolated and marginalized in their positions as they could have been in other local configurations. We met them in person for long discussions contrasting with journalistic interviews: open-focused interviews allowed them to present their feelings and activities extensively and more freely, without the limits inherent to the media time and format that many of them had experimented with.

WHAT THE INTERVIEWS DO NOT SAY

Before listening to what artists said, knowing what we can expect to learn from them—and even more, what they cannot tell us—is crucial. Three types of obstacles may affect our interpretation:

1. Evoking their anti-war activities at a given moment, artists always talk about past initiatives and they are likely to rewrite them *ex post* in several ways. In interviews, individual accounts and stories embedded in memories are inevitably de-contextualized from the social and collective temporalities they were rooted in.
2. Interviews depict individual and singular experiences, meaningful in relation to local configurations. At the same time, social significations of anti-war commitments are produced at a more collective level, as a result of the confrontation and combination of various social activities.

Constellations of sociabilities pre-exist, underlie and can outlive involvements in social movements.[18]

3. By telling their story and describing their feelings and choices, what artists provide is not an explanation of the logics of their involvement in anti-war movements. In the interviews, they gave us their "reasons to act" but, in fact, their opinions often preceded the coherent expression of their commitment: the conditions of their engagement still need to be elucidated.

Social Actors Depict Experiences *ex post*

To approach the limits of what the interviews tell us, we first need to get rid of a false dilemma: as sociologists, we have sometimes been confronted by people trying to warn us against social actors (especially artists, whose professional specialty would be to create a "fake reality," and even more performers who are used to "play roles," not to mention celebrities seen as the prototype of superficiality and pretense), who would potentially lie or manipulate us. The knowledge accumulated through our own work as well as other scholars' analysis leads us to different conclusions. Our experience has taught us that interviewees often happen to be more sincere than we would expect them to be, even when their actions are not necessarily socially legitimate (French "extreme right" activists studied in another context were sometimes—surprisingly—very prompt to explicitly refer to discourses and categorizations that are nowadays highly discrediting in society, associated with historical fascism and racism[19]), when speaking out seems risky for them (as it was for the judges who were investigating political scandals when we interviewed them for another research project[20], and as it may be in specific situations for anti-war artists), when they belong to categories that we could suspect of being more manipulative and non trustworthy for professional reasons (as in the stereotypes affected to the "Hollywood community," as well as—with different connotations, though—to politicians or journalists). In fact, most of the time, their behavior tends to resist our initial prejudgments regarding their potential attempts to dissimulate. Their expectation to find, in participation in a scientific study, a channel for authentic expression and a non-normative interlocutor probably has a lot to do with their "self-abandonment" during the interviews. This self-abandonment also echoes our Bourdieusian comprehensive approach, leading us to listen actively and attentively to our interlocutors' words and to remain vigilant during the interviews not to impose our own framework and problematic, to be able to observe our social actors' symbolic struggles without participating in their confrontations.[21]

Nevertheless, during the interviews, they always tell their story, not only as they lived it when things happened, but also as they see it *a posteriori*. Indeed, self-representations of political involvement depend on various temporalities: activism time, interview time (*ex post*), and the length of time

that separates the two (memory). We do not point here to the subjective and situated (in temporal, geographical and social spaces) characteristic of their discourses, as much as we underline the requirement to retroactively build a coherent story, implied by the practice of the interview itself. It has been analyzed before,[22] despite all the precautions that we could take, the phrasing of one's experience involves rationalization mechanisms, including the selection of certain events and their re-arrangement to form/write a story that sounds minimally presentable in public. The re-formulation of the past is always a re-creation. Situations are named and labeled *ex post*, from another viewpoint. Such a mechanism is not contradictory to actors' sincerity but it is in line with various perceptions and beliefs that make up a whole. Nevertheless, the more the artists have had to tell their story and to format it for public exposure, the more likely we are to find "smooth" and ready-for-use packages that they spontaneously deliver to us as well. Asking questions that they did not have to answer before and focusing on very practical interrogations opened up the possibility for a less pre-formatted discourse. Conducting the interviews at various moments of the process, including relatively early in the course of the mobilization, allowed us to collect relatively improvised and "knocked together" accounts while more systematized and "routinized" stories tended to appear later in the process. Meeting some of the artists twice, several years or months apart, enabled us to follow the changes in the representations of what happened and the anticipations of the foreseeable future of the protest. With time—as we will show—interpretation frames stabilized and artists came to share to some extent a more global and common vision, to position themselves in a history of "the anti-Iraq War movement," collectively produced by the combination of various public discourses (and their diffusion through diverse media). In a context in which anti-war protests have spread socially and politically, though one may gather discourses that have moved into their stride through time, one may meet artists giving free expression to thoughts formerly associated with subversion, insofar as the latter have become more "acceptable." This takes us back to a core idea of our analysis consisting in strengthening the contextual molding of discourses.

Another factor conditioning the interviews appears here as well: in a context of intense public controversy regarding the war, artists can feel the pressure of stigmatization strategies (from politicians supporting the war, journalists, and so on) pointing to them as unpatriotic Americans, or as ignorant people pretending to talk about politics without being really knowledgeable, for instance. This type of constraint exacerbates their need for public justification, visible in the interviews. They spontaneously develop reasonings to establish their legitimacy to speak out: the way they choose to do it and what they favor as an acceptable and efficient argument are directly connected to their professional identity and to the specific trajectory that led them to their current situation. As a result, some of them will claim to have a right to speak as an artist, whereas others confine their activism

within the limits of their human and constitutional rights (freedom of speech).

Although some of them fear the consequences of their public exposure as anti-war/leftist/activist-artists, most of the interviewees are used to presenting their thoughts and feelings in public. Such a socialization to public speech is largely common to artists who often appear with their art (or express it when they are performers) in public spaces, such publicity being a condition of their professional existence itself. In addition, some of the protagonists are, to an even greater degree, experts in public appearance and speech, as they have access to the mass media that recognition and popularity in their art field have granted them. Thus, they have had the opportunity (and often, from their viewpoint, the obligation, under the pressure of circles, made up of managers, agents, publicists, producers, gallery owners . . .) to learn how to present themselves in public and how to talk about their activism(s) so that it remains compatible with their career, and they tend to reuse this practical knowledge during the interviews. We should probably add that this is no more specific to artists than it would be to politicians, journalists, university professors or any other sort of "professionals of public discourse."

Artists' interviews often reveal an elevated degree of reflexivity, indicating that they have accumulated a significant volume of cultural capital. These resources may reinforce the proximity between the interviewees and the sociologist, which has to be taken into account for the analysis. Artists' mobilization of professional skills exceeds the use of metaphors translating poetically the stakes of activism. On some occasions, and probably thanks to a specific "corporal hexis,"[23] interviews may be staged in such a way that artists seem to embody political stakes in order to convince, throwing their arms up in the air or imitating the voices of those they perceive to be their political targets.[24]

The effects of artists' background, including such a relation to public speech, are thus carefully taken into account. Analyzing their professional trajectories and positions (which produce material conditions for action and representations, cognitive schemes), as well as their past experiences of activism, will lead us to explore the question of the potential reinvestments/ transfers of resources acquired in an artistic field both in the interviews (as we just suggested) and in the anti-war activism. Our introductions to the interviews are aimed at specifying these resources and identifying how they are expressed in activism itself.

The Meaning of Action Is a Collective and Situated "Product"

Regardless of possible biases, each interview can only give us a limited piece of a larger puzzle. Each interviewee literally depends on his/her own viewpoint: he/she always defines constraints, possibilities and opportunities in

the local world he/she belongs to. Action remains situated in time and space.[25] The "local world" of a social actor characterizes the sphere of reference in relation to which an action or a series of practices and interactions makes sense for him/her. For an anti-war movie actor, for example, this mental universe of relationships may include his professional counterparts—directors and other actors with whom he works or imagines he could work or expects to work, his agent and publicist, maybe his lawyer, producers he depends on—as well as journalists, activists groups (of artists or otherwise) he joined or just knows about, sometimes politicians he may interact with or relates to. The local world is a cognitive framework rather than a system made of face-to-face relationships, even though interactions remain of great importance in its definition.

It also points to a "social place" from which what happens elsewhere is perceived and filtered: indeed, all the events that occur elsewhere that a given social actor knows about do not automatically become part of his local world. For example, the attacks (initiated by political groups) targeting the country music band, The Dixie Chicks, after they declared being against the war and being ashamed to come from the same state as the president, and the boycott of their album by many country music radio stations, as revealed by the media, directly affected artists who were not in the same artistic field and had never met the members of the band: these artists deciphered what was happening in their own local configuration in reference to such an external "experience," developed precautionary behaviors towards their own everyday interlocutors and integrated this "risk" in their own discourses. Similarly, the success met by George Clooney and his company with "engaged movies" like *Syriana* or *Good Night and Good Luck* has been "translated" and "transposed" in their local world by other producers and directors who found it thinkable and doable, from that point on, to participate in the making of a "political film" with some of their own usual counterparts. In such cases, the representations of what happened elsewhere have been integrated into the definition of possible and appropriate actions at a local level. Among these "other scenes," some obviously appeared more crucial and meaningful than others. In fact, several hierarchies of the scenes of action occupy social actors' minds, depending on the type of art world concerned and artists' position in each art (sub-)field.[26] The extreme visibility and publicity given to some of them ("Hollywood," especially) has turned them into a focal point attracting the attention of the majority of the protagonists (and not only the artists).

Nevertheless, the relevant scenes of reference are never disconnected from professional specialties, combined with material localization. New York and Los Angeles artists (even in the same industry, like in theatre or film) do not necessarily share the same models of excellence and reference system with which to define the probable outcomes of a given action. Although the local world is not "local" in the strict geographic sense of that term, the relevant signification frames for an artist have a lot to do with the

ordinary interrelations he/she experiences on the scenes he/she physically belongs to. As the reader will see through the following interviews, the strength of the professional milieu's (implicit) rules leading, for instance, a television actress to euphemize her anti-war involvement is likely to materialize in a more invasive and decisive way if she has to cooperate daily in the same TV show with a team opposing her opinions: the importance of "reference figures" increases here with the intensity of the contacts implied by geographic proximity. Conversely, internationally known artists tend to have a larger universe of reference, since their potential allies in action are simultaneously more numerous and often more distant, geographically speaking.

If artists' "local worlds" cross over several specialized and professionalized fields (gathering other artists and counterparts in the art worlds as well as politicians, journalists, activists and so on, localized in various fields according to Pierre Bourdieu's model),[27] they never cease to be driven primarily by their own occupational rules of the game, whereas the journalists or politicians with whom they interact continue to follow their own logics and to define their own stakes. "Local worlds" do not prevail as a hybrid sphere, erasing the logics of specialized fields. The interviews will show that preserving their reputation and their position as professionals (artistic logics) while expressing their activist intentions and objectives (activist logics) generates dilemmas that the artists face and have to deal with.

Interviews Do Not Explain

The experiences, motivations and representations revealed by the artists, the initiatives that they describe, as valuable as they may be, do not constitute sociological *explanations* of their anti-war mobilization as such. To move from these heterogeneous accounts given by the artists to the construction of an analytical system embracing and decoding them, the sociologist has to re-create the embedded dynamics of activities, situated in diverse "local scenes" in the eyes of the protagonists, to understand how they articulated and came to "make movement." The first level of analysis that appears fully in the following chapters collects the artists' perceptions to interpret the determinants of their commitment in the light of their conceptions of possible, acceptable and effective forms of action. The intelligibility of artists' politicization and its "causes" is mediated by their beliefs regarding what is feasible, necessary and justifiable, or what is, instead, too risky and illegitimate. Artists have defined "situations for action," often described here as "a momentum" leading them to become committed against the war, identifying opportunities and constraints in their surrounding world: recourse to the notion of the "political opportunity structure"[28] might make a big analytical contribution, if we pay attention to the objective bias it contains. The research cannot choose to overlook an analysis of the political, cultural and economic context that surrounds and partly delimits the action of the organizations but such "windows" for action are indeed not

objective configurations; instead they consist in mental maps, representations of relationships, which exist in connection to others' practices and evolve collectively (and constantly, even though some representations of what an artist should do and be and how politicized he/she should be, for example, may stabilize and become more widely shared). At that level, social actors' voices are an irreplaceable material to draw the lines of "local worlds." They are also able to evaluate the accuracy of the sociologist's work and the adjustment between their own representations of what is at stake and the sociological reconstitution of situations: the "likelihood" of the sociologist's conceptions for the actors, at this stage, is probably a guarantee of reliability and a possible mode of verification of our hypotheses.[29]

This step does not end the sociologist's work, even though developing an extended and complete analysis of the anti-war movement of artists is not our goal with this book. To fully explain artists' activism and its evolution as their perceptions change, one needs to widen the scope of the analysis to scrutinize the variety of artistic games/professions to which the protagonists belong, and in which an action responds to another. The sociologist has to first retrace this system of interrelated actions, over a certain period of time: in our introductory comments to the interviews, we provide some elements allowing the reader to perceive the most relevant connections within the art worlds. Beyond this first process of generalization, there is still a need to conceptualize on a larger scale the interdependences (and sometimes the interactions) linking the artists, in several specialties, to participants in other social spheres, driven by their own specific logics of action. Only with this second level of generalization, extended to all the protagonists of the anti-war mobilizations, do we approach the explanation of movement dynamics as a whole. The sociological analysis draws "chain mechanisms" producing shifts in perceptions, through which power relationships can be transformed and the legitimacy to publicly represent and to speak for voiceless populations can be partially redistributed.[30]

WHAT THE ARTISTS' WORD UNVEILS

In the following paragraphs, we would like to give a brief foretaste of what the reader will learn through the interviews making up the book: we set out and arrange below what we consider to be the most significant lessons from our fieldwork, as regards the mobilization logics and rationalities for the artists, as well as the recent mutations in the relationships (and the distribution of powers) between the political field and some sections of the art worlds.

Classical Sociological Lessons and New Conclusions

Observing that heterogeneous trajectories and social characteristics/resources give rise to a diversity of commitments, levels and modes of

"political competence,"[31] without being innovative *per se*, still brings interesting outcomes: artists' anti-war commitment (including the timing of its occurrence, the forms of action seen as conceivable and appropriate, the core beliefs and values invested in activism, the definition of potential allies and supports, dangers and obstacles, the effects expected from this commitment and the future of the protest as the artists see it) makes sense in the light of their position in an art field, as well as the relation to politics and activism they had inherited from their (family, educational) backgrounds and built through past experiences. These data allow us to stabilize typical paths (with which we opened this introduction) and to refer the interviewed artists to them, to understand how representative of the positioning of a larger group in their art specialty toward the war they may be, and what kind of evolution in artists' relation to activism/politics comes out in this context. We can take—for instance—the involvement of a 60-year-old visual artist who feeds a sophisticated anti-war discourse with his pre-constituted knowledge about international politics and the Middle East and who relies on a pre-established familiarity with activists' groups of the radical left, remaining consistently active against the war (in the continuation of other commitments) and creating "anti-war art" as well as participating in the usual forms of collective action. With this we can distinguish, contrast and compare the commitment of a young theatre or film actor, possibly less educated, who lives his first experience of activism and gives it a much more ethical/humanitarian meaning, opting for "minimal" forms of involvement (signing a petition on line . . .), seen as more compatible with an emerging career. We can also understand how such heterogeneous types of involvement come to paradoxically influence/reinforce each other, when they symbolically unify through the participation in the same march or event. On the same basis, the reader can invalidate some stereotypical views regarding artists and politics: performers and entertainment artists do not necessarily fit with the vain and depoliticized image associated with Hollywood, for example.

From the artists' profiles, we can formalize three heterogeneous modes of relations to activism and politics: they partly intersect with various historical "generations," approaching politics differently.[32] Here, we distance ourselves from the thesis of a political apathy characterizing contemporary America and possibly other advanced democracies.[33] The three categories of relations to engagement distinguish the "activist pride" type following the 1970s from the "humanitarian activism" of the Eighties–Nineties. More interestingly, new profiles appear today and give rise to a third category: the "partitioned engagement." Such profiles have materialized in the context of the "anti-Iraq war movement" but seem to persist beyond that particular configuration. As we find them among the interviews, we will characterize them as recent and "unlikely" commitments, on the part of artists who adopt new forms of action: defining themselves primarily as artists and even more as professionals, convinced that making "political art" nowadays would be discrediting, they tend to separate their repertoires of