



Patterns of adaptation and recontextualisation: The transnational diffusion of Black Lives Matter to Italy and Germany

Donatella della Porta, Anna Lavizzari, Herbert Reiter, Moritz Sommer, Elias Steinhilper & Folashade Ajayi

To cite this article: Donatella della Porta, Anna Lavizzari, Herbert Reiter, Moritz Sommer, Elias Steinhilper & Folashade Ajayi (2023) Patterns of adaptation and recontextualisation: The transnational diffusion of Black Lives Matter to Italy and Germany, *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*, 10:4, 653-677, DOI: [10.1080/23254823.2023.2239324](https://doi.org/10.1080/23254823.2023.2239324)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23254823.2023.2239324>



Published online: 25 Aug 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 369



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Patterns of adaptation and recontextualisation: The transnational diffusion of Black Lives Matter to Italy and Germany

Donatella della Porta^a, Anna Lavizzari ^a, Herbert Reiter^a,
Moritz Sommer^b, Elias Steinhilper ^b and Folashade Ajayi^c

^aFaculty of Political and Social Sciences, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence, Italy;

^bDepartment Consensus and Conflict, German Centre for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM), Berlin, Germany; ^cMigration, Diversity and Justice Research Centre, Brussels School of Governance, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, Belgium

ABSTRACT

Following the killing of George Floyd on 25 May 2020, a wave of ‘Black Lives Matter’ (BLM) protests swept the globe, including most European countries. In this article, we provide a detailed comparative empirical account of the transnational diffusion of BLM protests from the USA to Italy and Germany. Shedding light on BLM mobilisations outside the USA, we complement theoretical reflections on protest diffusion by inquiring how the interplay of previously existing structural and contingent conditions influence such processes. The main theoretical contribution is hence singling out how some specific characteristics in the receiving context affect the diffusion process. Drawing from quantitative and qualitative data on the protest wave in the two countries, this research points at how, during episodes of cross-national diffusion of contentious politics, the triggering event reshaped existing social movement families in similar directions in different contexts. At the same time, however, it also points at differences in the ways in which existing actors adapt ideas coming from outside, through a mechanism of recontextualisation and adaptation. While the construction of similarities is crucial in distant contexts and cases of thin diffusion, specific national characteristics continue to play a prominent role in shaping diffusion processes.

ARTICLE HISTORY Received 30 May 2022; Accepted 17 July 2023

KEYWORDS Social movements; protest; diffusion; racism; Black Lives Matter; Germany; Italy

Introduction

Following the killing of George Floyd on 25 May 2020, a wave of ‘Black Lives Matter’ (BLM) protests swept the globe, including most European

CONTACT Anna Lavizzari  alavizza@ucm.es

Present Address: Faculty of Political Science and Sociology, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid, Spain

© 2023 European Sociological Association

countries. Despite the continent being in a full-fledged pandemic crisis, in June 2020, collective protest against intersecting inequalities unexpectedly intensified. Some forms of action, organisational models, and the collective framing travelled from the USA to Europe where they were adopted and adapted by pre-existing social movements which had previously mobilised against racism, in solidarity with migrants, or more broadly, against different forms of discrimination and violence.

Quickly spreading across countries, the BLM mobilisations fuelled hope for racial justice, social change, and a revitalisation of cosmopolitanism after a return to the nation state during and after the financial crisis (della Porta, 2015). While it remains to be seen to which extent these expectations will be met in future years, the BLM mobilisations constitute a collective political struggle and thus represented an intense moment of transnational contentious politics. In this sense, it is an ideal moment to analyse the changing forms of cross-national diffusion of ideas and practices, allowing to build upon but also develop a scholarly attention to the different paths through which contention spreads across countries and, especially, the ways in which ideas and practices are imported and adapted.

Looking at the mechanisms of transnationalisation, social movement scholars have addressed the cross-national exchange of ideas, frames, organisational forms, and repertoires of action as processes of cross-national *diffusion* (Givan et al., 2010; Soule, 2004, 2013; Soule & Roggeband, 2018). Going beyond the idea of spontaneous contagion (Roggeband, 2007; Tarrow, 2010), research paid attention to the conditions for diffusion, presenting arguments on geographical proximity, and the discursive construction of similarities. While it was expected initially that ideas travel into contiguous regions with similar structural conditions, social movements proved able to influence each other at great distance and across markedly different contexts (della Porta & Tarrow, 2005). Especially in intense moments of protest, characterised by ‘cognitive liberation’ (McAdam, 1982) and raised emotions (della Porta, 2020; Eren, forthcoming), ideas spread globally through a shared culture of solidarity. Empirical analyses have singled out different channels or ‘vectors’ (Gillan, 2020) of diffusion including dynamics of upwards and downwards scale shifts (della Porta et al., 1999; della Porta & Tarrow, 2005), the role of key actors as early or late adopters (Givan et al., 2010) as well as thick versus thin forms of diffusion (della Porta & Mattoni, 2014).¹

What has been at times acknowledged but not yet adequately thematised and researched is the ways in which *previously existing structural*

conditions as well as contingent ones influence the dynamics of diffusion. Global waves of contention – such as the one linked to the Global Justice Movement – have proven to take different forms at the national level (della Porta, 2007) but research has also shown that common critical junctures have often different impacts upon the relations between social movements and political parties in diverse domestic contexts (Roberts, 2015). Furthermore, protest features such as frames or action repertoires have different chances of success under different political conditions (Beissinger, 2002). Given that ideas are appropriated by specific actors and adapted to specific contexts, such an analysis needs to address the ways in which characteristics of the receiving actors and structural constraints in the adopting country filter external inputs. In this vein, Roggeband (2007, p. 248) has analysed how recontextualisation works when adopters face different cultural understandings and structural conditions, leading to different degrees of transformation between early adopters and late adopters (Roggeband, 2007). Building on this, we refer to recontextualisation as the process through which activists adapt frames, forms of actions, but also organisational models in order to achieve cultural resonance in the national context (della Porta et al., 2022). The main theoretical contribution of this article is therefore singling out how some specific characteristics in the receiving context affect the diffusion process.

A comparative case study of the BLM protest wave in the summer of 2020 in Europe provides an excellent opportunity to shed light on BLM mobilisations outside the USA, which have so far only scarcely been addressed (see introduction to this issue). Beyond this empirical contribution, the article seeks to revive scholarly attention to dynamics of protest diffusion, specifically, on how the same (external) trigger can have different impacts as these are influenced by some specific characteristics of the adopters. We draw from empirical evidence from two countries, Italy and Germany, with several similarities in terms of the presence of a post-fascist regime and, in comparison with other European countries such as France, Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom, or Belgium, a brief history of colonialism and a late acknowledgment process of racial discrimination after the Second World War. Yet, the two countries are also characterised by contextual differences in terms of both the characteristics of the anti-racist movement that adapted frames and protest forms and the (structural and contingent) political and discursive opportunities under which they operated. Accordingly, inquired in parallel, the two cases allow for both an empirical panorama

of BLM in different parts of Europe and for nuancing the understanding of complex patterns of transnational diffusion.

In both Italy and Germany, the BLM campaign in the summer of 2020 constituted a critical juncture by producing abrupt transformations in the field of anti-racist mobilisations and public debates about racism (Zajak et al., 2023). The spreading of the BLM mobilisations brought about the convergence of pre-existing groups in different movement areas but also the emergence of new initiatives and networks. Collective performances and symbolic actions² which were originally introduced by the BLM movement in the USA, spread across both countries and were being blended with those that already existed in the respective movement milieus (della Porta et al., 2022). What is more, the pandemic and the related anti-contagion measures created the need for further innovation in the protest forms. The BLM campaigns also contributed to the spreading of new collective frames by increasing the sensitivity to racialisation, bridging it to other forms of discrimination and repression. While a momentous, innovative campaign, the BLM events in the summer of 2020 were however embedded within a broad family of progressive social movements.

Our comparative perspective allows us to combine one of the first detailed empirical accounts of BLM protest dynamics outside the USA with a theoretical reengagement with patterns of diffusion and recontextualisation pointing at distinct (exogenous) opportunities and (endogenous) civil society dynamics. The article follows a threefold structure, introducing the data and methods used (2), followed by a structured comparison of the BLM protest waves in Italy and Germany regarding their forms of action, framings, and organising structures (3), to arrive at theoretical reflections on dynamics of transnational diffusion of contention more broadly (4).

Data and methods

In our analysis of the transnational diffusion of BLM from the USA to Italy and Germany, we draw on two types of data, protest event data and qualitative interviews. (1) We have comparatively mapped BLM protest events in the two countries in the period of two months following the killing of George Floyd (26 May–31 July 2020). For this purpose, we have performed a variant of ‘protest event analysis’ (Hutter, 2014). With a view to obtaining a more inclusive impression of the protest wave in the two countries, we have deviated from the dominant application of protest event analysis based on national newspapers, which mainly covers large

events (Earl et al., 2004) and have proceeded in three steps, instead: We used the basic yet inclusive string 'Black Lives Matter OR BLM AND [name of country]' in the Google search engine. Since this search predominantly showed events in big cities, we specified the search adding subsequently the names of all regions/states in Italy and Germany to the string. When protest events were reported at a specific location, but no details were given, we conducted additional searches and added the name of the locality. Through this procedure, we have identified a total of 263 protest events (111 in Germany, 152 in Italy). Key characteristics of all identified protest events were subsequently manually coded, providing us with information on the geographical distribution of the protest wave, the size of the protests, forms of action, frames, and the organisational backbone of the events.³ (2) To validate our findings, we have conducted semi-structured interviews with key protest organisers ($N=6$ per country). The selection of interlocutors followed a purposive strategy to account for different types of actors (old and new activists) and geographical variation. Due to the COVID-19 anti-contagion measures in place, all interviews have been conducted online in November and December 2020. The interview guide covered, amongst others, the organisational strategies regarding forms of action, framing, and coalition building. A list of interviews can be found in the Appendix.

The transnational diffusion of Black Lives Matter to Italy and Germany

Even though activists in the USA have protested against racism and police violence under the label 'Black Lives Matter' since 2013, these mobilisations have been predominantly confined to the USA (Lowery, 2017). The protest wave following the violent death of George Floyd, instead, rapidly travelled to various European countries (Milman et al., 2021). In both Italy and Germany, waves of anti-racist contention unfolded in the summer of 2020. In our protest event analysis, for Germany, we identified 111 protest events with explicit reference to 'Black Lives Matter,' mobilising a total of more than 220,000 protesters on the streets of many German cities (Table 1). With protests taking place in all 16 *Länder* (states), the protest landscape was strongly decentralised. For Italy, we identified even more events (152), spread on the entire national territory. These data already underline that, also compared to other countries in Europe, the resonance of BLM in Italy and Germany was strong and broad in geographical scope. Yet, the

Table 1. Participation, level of mobilisation, and location of BLM protest activity.

	Germany	Italy
Overall number of events	111	152
Protest events per 100,000 inhabitants	0.13	0.25
Average number of participants (if reported)	2313.3	659.7
Median number of participants (if reported)	1000	300
Protesters per 100,000 inhabitants	269.8	85.7
Protests by city size		
Small and middle cities (<100,000)	16.5%	45.3%
Large city (<500,000)	50.5%	42.1%
Metropolis (>500,000)	33.0%	12.5%

diffusion also shows cross-national quantitative and qualitative differences deserving further scrutiny.

The action repertoire of BLM

The overall high levels of mobilisation in the two countries can be explained by the opening of some ‘discursive opportunities’ (Koopmans & Statham, 1999) before the protest wave reached Europe. In Germany, shortly before Floyd’s death and the subsequent wave of BLM protests, two acts of racist terrorism further re-ignited public debates around racism: in October 2019, two people were shot in an attack against a synagogue and a kebab restaurant in Halle (*New York Times*, 2019); in February 2020, a right-wing extremist shot nine people in a racist attack at two bars in the city of Hanau (*BBC News*, 2020). Both attacks contributed to a growing potential for anti-racist mobilisation in Germany. In Italy, anti-racist campaigns had mobilised against the anti-migration politics of the Lega and its Secretary General, Matteo Salvini, who had become more and more influential as the Lega formed a governmental coalition with the Five Stars Movement and Salvini became Minister of Interiors in 2018 (see Lunaria, 2021). Conflicts had particularly developed around rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea, where many migrants died in attempts to reach the European coast. Also in Italy, several murders of migrants by militants of radical right groups had triggered waves of protest in the years preceding the pandemic.

Apart from these similarities, the data presented in Table 1 point however also marked differences between Germany and Italy in the average size of the protest events and the overall level of mobilisation. In Germany, the average protest involved around 2313 participants, considerably more than in Italy (659 participants), with several massive mobilisations in urban centres. In the largest protest event in Munich

alone, 25,000 people took to the streets. Further large protest events with more than 10,000 participants were organised in Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne, Leipzig, and Freiburg. In Italy, instead, the by far largest protest event was considerably smaller, assembling around 5000 participants in Milan. While smaller, the protest events in Italy were however more numerous, being much more present in smaller and middle-sized cities than in Germany. Finally, based on the available reports in the newspaper, the level of mobilisation proportional to the country's population was three times higher in Germany.

This general pattern of mobilisation might also be affected by the national differences in the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic and relatedly, by the anti-contagion measures in place by the time of George Floyd's killing. As one of the countries more severely hit during the first wave of the pandemic, with mortality rates by far exceeding those in Germany, Italy had seen much stricter regulations to limit contagion. These included very severe lockdown measures and a ban on public gatherings and assemblies which remained in force throughout June 2020. While marches were therefore prohibited in Italy, in Germany the BLM marches were not banned *ex ante*. Indeed, in Germany, BLM were among the first mass protests after the lifting of some of the toughest COVID-19 restrictions in May 2020. It is no surprise then that in Italy, marches were extremely rare, particularly compared to Germany, while static rallies and sit ins constituted by far the dominant forms of protest (Table 2).

In Italy, the few marches were mostly organised by leftist groups referred to as 'antagonist left' in the Italian mainstream press, for instance, squatted social centres, or they were classified not as street demonstrations but as 'walks' by the organisers. The dominant protest form in Italy – variously named by the organisers as a *presidio*, flash-mob, or sit-in – was a combination of performances imported from the US BLM campaign. It consisted of meetings in a public square, usually a

Table 2. Forms of action during BLM protests in Germany and Italy.

	Germany	Italy
Cultural protest	1.8%	3.3%
Static rally, sit-in, assembly	70.0%	77.0%
Demonstration/protest march (moving)	27.3%	5.3%
Other	0.9%	14.4%
Total	111	152

Notes: To limit the effect of media reporting biases, this quantitative overview of forms of action only contains the main forms. 'Cultural protest' refers to artistic performances, including dances, concerts or poetry which was explicitly framed as antiracist by the organizers.

central one in front of the town hall, the building of the prefecture or, where they existed, the US consulates or the embassy. Usually, the event included 8:46 min of silence, the time span of George Floyd's killing, also often kneeling, raising one fist, and wearing black. Another feature, in retrospect seen by many organisers as the most important one (della Porta et al., 2022) consisted in an open microphone, aimed at giving voice to those that are usually not being listened to in public, including marginalised migrants and other racialised individuals with personal experiences of racism.

In various cities throughout Italy, the *Sardine*-movement – active since November 2019 in connection with the regional election campaign in Emilia-Romagna in defense of constitutional values, in particular anti-racism and anti-fascism (specifically against Salvini's anti-migration/anti-rescue decrees) – carried out a particular form of protest. It consisted of painting a multi-colour giant script (up to 100 metres long) 'Black Human Migrant Lives Matter' – instead of 'Black Lives Matter' – on street pavements or centrally located on public⁴ According to the declaration of representatives of the *Sardine* in Lecce, the first city where the action was conducted, they wanted to express '100 shades of humanity,' adapting the BLM-protests to Italy and discursively linking BLM and anti-racist stances to migration and migrants' issues and experiences.

Also, actions in the USA and Great Britain against statues of historical figures labelled as racist had a significant echo in Italy, among others because some of these protests had targeted Christopher Columbus. A nationwide debate was triggered by the gesture of Milanese activists that poured red paint over the statue of Indro Montanelli in a park of the city carrying his name.⁵ In Rome, the BLM protests gave a decisive push to an ongoing campaign to rename a metro station, dedicated to Amba Aradam, the location of a battle during the Ethiopian anti-colonial war that was decided by the massive use of poisonous gas against the local populations. The city government decided to rename the metro station in memory of Giorgio Marincola of Italian-Somalian origin, known as the 'Black partisan' who fought against fascism and national socialism, but the name of the street Amba Aradam remained in place, and streets carrying this name continue to exist in several other Italian cities. In fact, also in other cities, BLM-activists campaigned against street names connected with Italy's colonial and fascist past.⁶ While in our analysis cultural forms of protests were employed in Italy as a way of reappropriating the country's cultural heritage, other research focusing on BLM protests in Italy has shown that other forms of 'ideological

vandalism' – such as red paint attacks on colonial public monuments – were also employed in the context of so-called heritage politics (Budabin, 2023).

In Germany instead, the loosening of pandemic related restrictions allowed activists to resort more regularly to the traditional protest form of marches (27 per cent of protests compared to 5 per cent in Italy, Table 2), which – due to their interruption of traffic and moving location – tended to be more visible, but also complicated the compliance with Covid-19-related distancing rules. While using marches as a form of action, protest organisers were aware of the delicate decision to organise large protests during a pandemic and constantly reminded participants to be careful and comply with the rules. Some of the established organisations, such as the BLM Berlin group, which was founded already before the killing of George Floyd, opted against organising street protest in times of a pandemic altogether. They stressed possible health threats for the protesters and notably for Black protesters as a risk group affected by racism and health issues resulting from social and economic marginalisation. In this understanding, protecting Black Lives for them meant refraining from street protest and pivoting to online activism.

Overall, the repertoire of action in Germany, however, was less affected by the pandemic, while it was similar to the Italian case, strongly influenced by cross-national diffusion. In the vast majority of protest events, the organisers adopted elements of the repertoire of action performed by BLM protesters in the USA. Similar to the Italian case, most protests featured 8:46 min of complete silence as a way to commemorate the killing of George Floyd, who was held down for this period of time, despite repeatedly stating 'I can't breathe.' Indeed, many events, including some of the largest events organised at the beginning of the protest wave were explicitly announced as 'silent demos' adapting a common form of action of Black activism in the USA (Barron, 2012) to the German context. Various newspaper reports indicate that many protest organisers deliberately chose non-contentious tactics and an affirmative signalling of peacefulness vis-a-vis the police and the wider public – that is, by remaining silent. In some cases, however, groups also explicitly distanced themselves from the 'silent demos', labelling their demonstrations with programmatic titles such as 'break the silence' or 'silence is not the answer' and engaging in more disruptive forms of action. In addition to silence as an important element of the protest repertoire, the protest events also integrated other symbolic actions, known from

the US context, including kneeling down and raising one fist as a symbol of (solidarity with) Black resistance.

Reconfigurations of anti-racist movements: Organising structures of BLM

The 2020 BLM protests in both Germany and Italy introduced new activists to the scene, but also involved social movement organisations that had participated in previous mobilisations (see [Table 2](#)). While in both countries many diverse groups took part in the protests, there was a different balance among them in the two countries with organisers from Black, African, and Afrodiasporic communities more present in Germany and activists from other left-wing social movements, including old-left associations and social centres more present in Italy. These differences are linked to previous developments of anti-racist and pro-migrant organisations in the two countries.

In Germany, the protests were particularly successful in mobilising new segments of society in general, and young Black individuals in particular. The protests were predominantly organised spontaneously by young Black individuals or newly formed groups – with no previous experience in protest organisation or any strong ties to anti-racist organisations. This is especially true for several of the ‘silent demos’, which were initiated by two Black women, one of whom had never attended a protest before as she did not consider protest as a useful political tool prior to the BLM protest:

I remember how I cursed the Fridays for Future demos back then, because they always blocked everything, and I never understood why they did that. In retrospect, however, having experienced it myself, I understand very well why people take to the streets and protest. (Interview G 4)

As documented in [Table 3](#), the prominent role of new actors is a shared feature of many protests in Germany as more than 50 per cent of the BLM protest events were organised by individual organisers or newly created BLM groups, and an additional 17 per cent were organised by migrant or racialised German associations, most of them Black and Afrodiasporic German associations. Despite the diversity of the Black population(s) in Germany, the key organisers were not migrants, but young Black German citizens. Other groups, such as African migrants and migrant self-organisations were less centrally involved in these protests. In some towns, the spontaneous organisation of protests resulted in the revitalisation of

Table 3. Protest events by type of organisers in Germany and Italy (percentages of valid cases).

	Germany	Italy
Individual organiser	28.7%	16.0%
BLM group	33.0%	16.0%
Anti-racist/anti-fascist organisation	23.4%	13.2%
Black and Afrodiasporic communities/migrant organisations	20.2%	10.4%
Migrant solidarity organisation	5.3%	13.2%
'Old' (left) association	3.2%	11.8%
Social centre	1.1%	13.9%
Student organisation	2.1%	25.0%
Political party	9.6%	5.6%
Trade union	1.1%	3.5%
'New social movement' organisation (feminist; LBGTQI, environmental, peace)	2.1%	18.1%
Other	1.1%	8.3%
Total valid cases	94	144

existing initiatives such as the *PoC Hochschulgruppe Leipzig*, a university initiative of and for racialised students. In others, by contrast, the central role of formerly unorganised individuals led to the creation of new local networks, that is, *Black Power Frankfurt*, *New Normal Saarbruecken* and *Black Community Foundation*, an emerging national network with representatives in more than twenty cities. Overall, the protests strengthened the decentralisation of anti-racist activism by Black People and People of Color (BPoC)⁷ outside of Berlin where many established, vocal Black and BPoC anti-racist initiatives and organisations are traditionally based.

While this indicates a strong capacity of the BLM campaign to reach beyond the previously mobilised social movement milieu, the protests also built upon the experience of the German anti-racist movement of the last decades. Accordingly, the newspaper reports also document the involvement of well-known movement organisations in some of the BLM protest events. Black activist groups have mobilised against racism in Germany for decades (Ha et al., 2007), including the initiative *ISD* (Initiative Black Persons in Germany) or *Generation Adefra*, a feminist association of Black women. Another segment of the anti-racist left has emerged from an anti-fascist tradition, which has countered far-right activism since the 1990s. While predominantly populated by white Germans, the racist attacks in Hanau had brought about a novel bridging of anti-fascism and anti-racism mirrored in a new network *Migrantifa* founded by BPoC activists in February 2020. Also, other cases of racist violence in the past had led to the creation of anti-racist initiatives. One of these cases was the death of Sierra Leonean asylum seeker Oury Jalloh, who, while in handcuffs, died in a fire in police custody in

Dessau in 2005. This case sparked the *Initiative to Commemorate Oury Jalloh*, which has since mobilised regularly, also in the context of BLM. The same holds true for the anti-racist alliance *NSU Komplex Auflösen* (Dissolve NSU Complex), which was founded in 2011 following the uncovering of the so-called National Socialist Underground (NSU), an extreme right terrorist group responsible for racist murder and attempted murder in dozens of cases.

These and other established actors in the field of anti-racist mobilisations were also involved in the organisation of protests; yet new organisations also emerged. This reconfiguration of groups and activists that had previously only sporadically interacted with each other within the anti-racist field led to debates and tensions on the relationship between anti-racism and identity politics between BPoC and white organisers on whose voices should (not) take centre stage. At times, local groups supported Black individuals in taking up visible roles, and Black activists were the spokespeople of BLM demonstrations. Other groups refused to include white activists into the organisational core at all. Black activists also mentioned the lack of sensitivity concerning anti-racist debates and vocabulary (such as discussions about ‘reverse racism’ or whiteness) among white (but also Black) activists as a source of conflict and as an emotional burden for the organisational work. This centering of Black actors and Black perspectives as part of Black and Afrodiasporic anti-racist mobilisations in Germany created at times organisational challenges, but also initiated learning processes on positionalities and possibilities to strengthen marginalised groups within mobilisations. Beyond this embeddedness in the broader field of anti-racist activism in Germany, the BLM protests strongly affected relations in the heterogeneous field of Black activism in Germany that bourgeoned since the 1980s and is heavily influenced by Black Feminist Thought and Practice (Florvil, 2020). At times, the prominent role of ‘first-timers’ resulted in tensions between two different ‘generations’ of Black activists that not only refer to the activists’ age – although many newcomers were indeed young (Interview G2). The term ‘generation’ for us also indicates the level of experience with (Black) anti-racist organisations and networks and claims. The vigour of the newcomers was generally applauded and welcomed, although experienced and more militant activists with an intersectional and Black anti-racist focus also underlined a sense of frustration in the light of what was often conceived as naivety and a lack of awareness: ‘[A]t times, this has been a frustrating experience, since we’ve been trying over and over again to point this out: Folks, Black

activism in Germany doesn't start in 2020, but has existed since ... at least the late 80s.' (Interview G1)

Accordingly, with regard to the reconfiguration of the antiracist organisational field, the BLM protest wave in Germany has in the short term sparked an activation and/or acknowledgement of new decentralised grassroots groups headed by mostly young Black activists, which strengthened the visibility of Black organisations. This in turn has also introduced a renegotiation of roles between different generations of activists within the broader antiracist organisational field.

As for the Italian case, many events were organised locally and from below as well, and the sources often reported the names of individuals as organisers, who in some cases formed a BLM group. In these cases, the organisers usually underlined that they had no ties to political parties or associations and explicitly asked participants not to show any party banners or symbols. As an interviewee noted

It all started with S., this girl who has always been interested in these issues. She had seen the Instagram posts by Diletta Belotti, a Roman activist [focusing on labour rights], and got inspired. They opened this WhatsApp group of followers on Instagram, taking the idea from Diletta. By posting stories on Instagram this other girl was intercepted, who then contacted me to try to organize a protest together. After a fast exchange on Instagram and WhatsApp, adding people, we gathered in a park during the period of restriction measures. (Interview I5)

Migrants, second generation immigrants, and Black Italians were very much present as participants – in particular, making use of the opportunity of the open microphone – but also as organisers of events (as individuals or organisations). We identified both organisations of migrants (often organised on the basis of origin, i.e. Senegalese, Moroccan, etc.) and of second generation immigrants (like *NIBI: Neri Italiani – Black Italians*). In a conspicuous number of cases, protests were organised or supported by organisations connected with solidarity networks for refugees and asylum seekers and with rescue operations in the Mediterranean in particular.

Compared to Germany, in Italy, the role of established progressive social movement organisations was more prominent (Table 2). Almost 50 per cent of the organisations are student organisations, squatted social centres, or 'old left' groups. Several press reports stressed the presence of many young people at the events; in fact, organisations of high school and university students were prominently represented among the organisers. From the very beginning, some of these groups followed

a national strategy: for 6 June, *Link – Coordinamento Universitario, Rete della Conoscenza*, and *Unione degli Studenti* called for the organisation of i.e. flash mobs in front of embassies. Moreover, LGBTIQ-organisations (*Arcigay*, various Pride-committees, etc.) participated in numerous events, on one occasion (Oristano) being the only organiser. By bridging anti-racism to anti-fascism, old left groups played also an important role. This was the case for some former collateral organisations of the Italian communist party (PCI), in particular for *Associazione ricreativa e culturale Italiana* (ARCI), that had already played an important role in the global justice movement as well as in several campaigns on migrant rights. Also, the National Association of Partisans (ANPI) that recently opened its ranks to young people, was present at the protests as were some established trade unions, in particular the (left-wing) *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro* (CGIL). Social movement organisations born on the Left in previous waves of protests included grassroots trade unions and squatted social centres. In general, political parties were less active, including the various tiny offspring of the old Italian Communist Party and the Democratic Party (centre left) which were only visible through the participation of some local politicians in events. Finally, two newly formed organisations were particularly visible in the Italian BLM protests, the already mentioned *Sardine* movement and *Potere al Popolo*, a political party founded in November 2017, which describes itself as belonging to the social and political left, being anti-liberalist, anti-capitalist, communist, socialist, environmentalist, feminist, laic, pacifist, libertarian, and *meridionalista* its programme.

One of the most visible impacts in the short term has been the effect of protests on movement organisations, notably the emergence of new organisations and consequent creation of power imbalances between older and new antiracist actors, as well as among new actors themselves. The activation of Black subjectivities within the movement is perceived as a turning point with respect to previous mobilisations and in particular in relation to already existing actors, mostly focused on migrant issues and still predominantly white in their composition (della Porta et al., 2022). Moreover, the internal empowerment of Black and racialised people in the various groups made issues of colour-blindness and white privilege within progressive social movement organisations even more manifest. The protest campaign catalysed attention to the injustice perpetrated against racialised people in the Italian context, triggering the emergence of a new organisational network in search of a new identity. In terms of immediate effects, the campaign has therefore allowed to give visibility to

a generation of antiracist activists that until then had remained mostly on the background (della Porta et al., 2022).

US reference and recontextualisation: Framing BLM

While the worldwide protests were sparked by a sense of indignation and solidarity with the movement in the USA, they were also more than acts of solidarity. National and local social movement actors adapted the anti-racist frames from the USA into their own local and national contexts, including widespread frames and claims. Globally relevant anti-racist frames therefore interacted with national cultures of protest and domestic debates, including issues touching upon colonialisation, anti-fascism, police brutality, and solidarity with racialised minorities (often both in the USA and the national context).

The comparison of Germany and Italy reveals that the very same frames imported from the USA were variously bridged with other frames. Particularly, our data documents a diffusion in two separate phases. Whereas the first week of demonstrations in both countries were dominated by stronger references to racism in the USA, national references became stronger later on. Apart from this similarity, there are important differences in the patterns of frame diffusion. In Italy, the framing of the protests was influenced by a traditionally strong linkage of anti-racism with the claims for migrant rights and a contingent return to (traditional) anti-fascist framing in the campaign against the backlash against citizens' rights that Salvini and the Lega had brought about (della Porta et al., 2022). In Germany, instead, the bridging to issues of migration was less prominent while more focus was put on general notions of racism and solidarity with affected groups as well as recent cases of police violence (Table 4).

Table 4. Framing of BLM protests in Germany and Italy (percentage of valid cases).

	Germany	Italy
General anti-racism	72.1%	63.8%
Anti-Black racism	4.5%	3.3%
Institutional racism	20.7%	30.3%
Migrant rights/citizenship	6.3%	34.9%
Solidarity with racialised groups	32.4%	25.7%
Racist violence and police brutality	43.2%	46.1%
Equality/anti-discrimination/(social) justice	2.7%	24.3%
Anti-fascism	7.2%	13.8%
Decolonisation	2.7%	5.3%
Other	1.8%	9.9%
Total	111	152

In Italy, considering the various backgrounds of the organisations involved in the BLM events, it is unsurprising that we also find a considerable variety of claims. Needless to say, most if not all events included the core claims of the BLM protests, that is, anti-racism, anti-police brutality and justice for the victims. In numerous events, these claims were in various ways connected with the situation in Italy. For example, the demand ‘Say their names’ was written on hand-painted placards with this slogan (in English) followed by the names of Black people killed in Italy, mainly during racist attacks by right-wing radicals. Indeed, claims against racist violence perpetrated by non-state actors were frequent and accounted for 20.4 per cent of the 46.1 per cent reported in Table 4. Furthermore, while victims of police violence were mentioned concerning police brutality, alongside relatives of Black victims, relatives of white Italian victims of state violence appeared as speakers in BLM rallies, as in the case of Florence. Very often mentioned during various events was the name of Stefano Cucchi, who died in police custody in 2009. Because of the activism of his sister Ilaria, who appeared at several BLM events, this case had a considerable impact on Italian public opinion. Repeatedly recalled were also the drowning of refugees and asylum seekers in the Mediterranean and the extreme exploitation of migrant workers, that is, in Italian agriculture.

In numerous events, the open microphone was taken as an opportunity by migrants, second generation immigrants, and Black Italians to denounce their own experiences of racism in Italy as well as the impact of Italian laws as institutional racism, in particular, the recent security decrees of Matteo Salvini and the laws on citizenship (in Italy following the *ius sanguinis*, that is the citizenship of the parents). Successively, this led to common mobilisations of BLM groups and migrant organisations for the legalisation of undocumented migrants in some cities. This was the case in the Tuscan city of Pontedera, where a BLM event led to the foundation of an association of second-generation immigrants called ‘*Futuro è ora*’ (future is now). As an activist noted:

This is one of the legacies of BLM, the highlighting of structural racism, declined in its different forms, and linked to other inequalities – and the capacity to operationalize this change in the agenda of contemporary movements. (Interview I7)

A master frame that allowed for the direct connection of the BLM protests with the Italian context was anti-fascism. The frame was put forward by old left groups (i.e. ANPI, ARCI, *Rifondazione Comunista*),

new left groups (grassroots trade unions, occupied social centres) and recently formed organisations like *Potere al Popolo* and the *Sardine*. With reference to the Italian constitution, anti-fascism was often connected with the refusal of discrimination, also providing a bridge to the claims of LGBTIQ organisations. Considered as of particular importance in this respect is Article 3 of the Italian constitution, that establishes not only equal social dignity and equality before the law without distinction of sex, 'race', language, religion, political opinion, personal, and social conditions, but also declares it a duty of the Republic to

remove those obstacles of an economic or social nature which constrain the freedom and equality of citizens, thereby impeding the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic and social organization of the country.⁸

In Germany, we too find that while the framing of the protests was certainly inspired by the racist murder of George Floyd and the subsequent mobilisations in the USA, the protests were actively adapted into the German context. As noted above, the protests had very strong symbolic connections to the USA, with frequent use of English language slogans, the 8:46 min of silence referring to Floyd's killing, and the widespread wearing of black clothing to express grief. Indeed, the explicit reference to racism in the USA during BLM protests were considerably more frequent in Germany (in 36 per cent of protest events, compared to 21 per cent in Italy). Read together with the differences in the organisational structure of the protest wave in the two countries, it seems that the newly mobilised actors referred more to the US context, while more established social movement actors more actively adapted and contextualised BLM.

Yet, also in Germany, slogans with explicit reference to the USA, including 'I can't breathe,' 'Racism kills,' 'Black Lives Matter', 'Stop police violence' were bridged with references to Germany. Frames related the killing of Floyd to prominent cases of racist violence in Germany, including the above-mentioned series of murders and attempted murders by the far-right terrorist group *National Socialist Underground* and the racist murders in Hanau in February 2020. The slogan 'Say Their Names,' used in the US protests to commemorate and scandalise the death of human beings, was taken up to also name recent victims of both state and non-state racist violence in Germany.

In a similar vein, the outrage following the killing of George Floyd was adapted into claims against racist state violence within German judiciary

and security institutions. One example are references to the prominent case of Oury Jalloh mentioned above. Claims also bridged Floyd's death to the highly contentious police practice of racialised police controls (racial profiling) in Germany and the scandalous connections between the police and far-right groups (NSU 2.0) – thereby hinting at institutionalised routines as fertile grounds for racist police violence. In some cases, the BLM protests explicitly referred to institutional forms of racism, and thereby countered the dominant individualistic narrative according to which racism is mostly perpetrated by individual right-wing extremists at the fringes of society.

In some selected cases, protests against racism were embedded in a critique of German colonial history and legacies, particularly colonial atrocities such as the genocide against the Nama and Herero in the former colony 'German Southwest Africa' (now Namibia) and, that is, called for the renaming of public spaces that commemorate colonial perpetrators. Similar to the mentioned case in Rome, in Berlin, a metro station was renamed following the protests as the city's public transportation services eventually responded to Black organisations' advocacy efforts that had started several years before. Strikingly, despite the salience of migration in Germany and the increase in racist attacks on asylum seekers since 2015 (Fleischmann & Steinhilper, 2017; Hinger, Stern, & Daphi, 2019), the bridging with claims on migration policies and the situation of BPoC migrants and asylum seekers during BLM protests was considerably less frequent than in Italy (Table 3). This finding corresponds with the slightly larger role of migrants in the organisation of protests in Italy but more importantly, the more accentuate reference to the US case, in which racism is by and large discussed independently from issues of migration.

Comparing BLM protests in context: Some conclusions

In this comparative account of BLM mobilisations in Italy and Germany, we have argued for a complex view on the interplay of structural and contingent factors in processes of transnational protest diffusion. Evidence from two countries with similarities in their structural conditions reveal that diffusion of eventful moments is filtered through the characteristics of the mobilising structures at the domestic level. Diffusion implies the importance of meaning-making by adopters, which accounts for both similarities and differences in the adaptation of the triggering event of George Floyd's murder. In both Italy and Germany, not only

the very protest performances, including slogans, were imported from the USA but also was the emphasis given to reflections on racism, Blackness, and the national colonial past and legacies. Moreover, in both countries, the recontextualisation was achieved by a mix of emerging organisations and pre-existing organisations, which had previously mobilised against racism and in solidarity with migrants. Protests spread through thin diffusion, in milieus that were dense in organisational ties and virtual connections. Often, local events were called for by single individuals or small nets, quickly seeing a convergence of activists that had already mobilised in previous waves of protests but also by (especially young) people, often Black or Persons of Colour affected by racism.

Notwithstanding these similarities, the different discursive opportunities as well as the configuration of actors that actively imported the protests led to different forms of recontextualisation. In Italy, protests mostly targeted the right-wing backlash, with pro-migrant and anti-fascist frames especially widespread against the Lega in power – a situation that had no parallel in Germany. While the protest wave in Germany witnessed a stronger presence of (individual) newcomers and, especially, Black and Afrodiasporic German initiatives, Italy showed a stronger presence of left-wing organisations that had traditionally mobilised in solidarity with migrants and against fascism. In this sense, the BLM protests are at the same time influenced by the previous history of anti-racism and pro-migrants struggles at the national (but also local) level and the impact on them, acting as transformative events. In Italy, the BLM protests intervened in a specific moment of the anti-racist movement which, since its first development in the 1980s, has been strongly linked to migrant solidarity networks and struggles for migrant rights with a particular focus on restrictive immigration regulatory policies. The leftist BLM organisers thus navigated within a culturalist framework ‘determined by the felt need to “deal with” the problems faced by immigrants and, its own words, to embrace cultural diversity’ (Lentin, 2004). Moreover, and notwithstanding some important struggles carried out by migrants, Italy has for the most part lacked an anti-racist movement led by BPoC. Anti-racist mobilisations have been instead organised primarily by white activists joining from leftist political parties and labour unions (Hawthorne & Piccolo, 2016), in what has been often labelled ‘performative antiracism’ (Pesarini, 2020). Beyond the focus put on immigration in the understanding of contemporary anti-racism in Italy, another important aspect is related to the anti-racism put

forward by left-wing organisations vis-à-vis Italy's history of fascism (Lentin, 2004).

In Germany, the BLM protest wave unfolded in a national context in which the anti-racist movement has long remained rather fragmented, with a variety of actors mobilising on particular issues, including the opposition against the far right or the support of migrants. In the 2000s civil society refugee reception crisis diversified with the emergence of new actors, including migrant self-organisations or groups self-identifying as 'new Germans' (explicitly highlighting their German citizenship rather than a family background of migration to Germany). From 2014 onwards, the refugee reception crisis 2015 sparked a strong activation of progressive civil society actors (Karakayali & Steinhilper, 2018). Despite this recent wave of migrant support in Germany and the occasional presence of actors involved in migrant activism – in contrast to Italy – BLM did only partly bridge racism to the salient issues of migration. Rather, the protests in the US activated both established anti-racist groups and particularly a new segment of society in Germany, which was either not yet involved in contentious action at all, or at least had not been in the front row of anti-racist mobilisation. Established progressive movement organisations, which had also joint forces for liberal migration policies and against the far-right (Stjepandić, Steinhilper, & Zajak, 2023), served as an amplification, rather than the driving force of the BLM mobilisations. The reconfiguration encompassed learning processes but also frictions between more established and emerging actors both between Black and Afrodiasporic organisations as well as in relation to the wider predominantly white anti-racist field. These frictions indicate that the anti-racist field in Germany included a multitude of relatively influential actors prior to the 2020 BLM mobilisations that at times struggled over visibility. This marks a stark contrast to the Italian case, where less conflicts were reported and established progressive movement actors constituted the backbone of the Italian BLM mobilisations.

In sum, our research points at how, during episodes of cross-national diffusion of contentious politics, a triggering event, such as the murder of George Floyd, can reshape existing social movement families in similar directions in different contexts. At the same time, however, our findings point to differences in the ways in which existing actors adapted protest forms coming from outside, through a mechanism of recontextualisation (della Porta et al., 2022). While the construction of contextual similarities through meaning-making is crucial in distant

geographical contexts and cases of thin diffusion (characterised by digital networked decentralised activists rather than transnational organisational committees or personal ties), the specific national characteristics continue to play a role.

These insights into dynamics of BLM mobilisations outside the US open multiple avenues for further research including contrasting these findings with an analysis of BLM in national contexts with longer colonial histories and larger Black populations such as the United Kingdom, France, Belgium or the Netherlands. Furthermore, a longitudinal perspective could shed light on how the eventful 2020 BLM protests as one of the first largescale anti-racist mobilisations in Italy and Germany have transformed the internal configuration and frames of progressive social movements in the two countries in the medium and long term.

Notes

1. Thin diffusion is characterised by a lower level of organisational transnationalisation and a greater role of digital platforms in networking decentralised activists without close personal or organisational ties (della Porta & Mattoni, 2014, p. 285 f.).
2. We refer to 'symbolic actions' for elements of protest activities, which did not constitute the main form of action, yet were used additionally, such as kneeling, wearing black, or raising one fist.
3. As any newspaper based content analysis, our protest mapping is subject to reporting biases or missing values for specific features of protest (Earl et al., 2004). Yet protest event analysis remains to date the most reliable method to conduct comparative analyses on protest patterns. Furthermore, since we have applied the protest mapping procedure in both countries consistently, we expect the potential bias to be consistent across the two cases. With a view to missing value biases related to differences in reporting, we have limited our analysis to features of protest, which are particularly likely to be reported in the news, for example, number of participants, organizer, and claims. More specific features (such as wearing black or kneeling are less likely to be reported in short articles and are therefore not included in the quantitative analysis).
4. For this kind of action, they needed the consent of local governments, that in some cases (at least initially) was denied (for instance in Milan and Rome).
5. Indro Montanelli was a famous Italian journalist, conservative if not reactionary but in the last stage of his career anti-Berlusconi. He had been a volunteer in the fascist war of aggression against Ethiopia, negated the use of poisonous gas by Italian troops, and according to his own autobiographical writings during his stay in Ethiopia bought an Ethiopian girl (a minor) as a sex slave CNN (2020). In their pamphlets, activists referred in particular to the latter episode. Representatives of the association of Italian partisans (ANPI) also

underlined the allegedly systematic denigration of Italian partisans by Montanelli.

6. A special situation existed in areas of Italy inhabited by 'historical' minorities, in particular Sardegna and Alto Adige/Südtirol. Here Black Lives Matter protests were connected with claims against Italian colonialism and fascism and for cultural selfdetermination. In Cagliari, activists targeted the statue of Carlo Felice, whose authoritarian and rigid rule as Vice King of Sardinia had led to him being known as 'Carlo Feroce (ferocious)'. One of the BLM-events in Sassari was organised under the motto 'Black lives matter – Sardinian lives matter;' a banner on the left side of the stage carried the inscription 'Black lives matter – no justice no peace,' a second banner on the right side of the stage said 'Savoia assassini di Sardi – Sardinian lives matter.' In the parliament of the autonomous province of Bolzano/Bozen, the motion of a German speaking party, denouncing monuments celebrating Italian victories in the Ethiopian war and other fascist relics, led to a controversial debate and was approved only partially.
7. With Black People and People of Colour (BPoC), we refer to groups that are racialised and marginalised based on their (ascribed) ethnic, religious and/or cultural origins (Hamann & Lemberg, 2010).
8. See <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b59cc.html>.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by German Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend: [Grant Number 3921405RAM].

ORCID

Anna Lavizzari  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7437-4142>

Elias Steinhilper  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4821-5724>

References

- Barron, J. (2012). *A history of making protest messages heard, silently*. <https://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/06/15/a-history-of-making-messages-heard-silently/>.
- BBC News. (2020). *Germany shooting: Vigils held for victims of racist attack*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-51581930>.

- Beissinger, M. R. (2002). *Nationalist mobilization and the collapse of the Soviet State*. Cambridge studies in comparative politics/general editor, Margaret Levi. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511613593>
- Budabin, A. (2023). Heritage politics in the case of Black Lives Matter in Bolzano-Bozen, Italy. *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23254823.2023.2169183>
- CNN. (2020). Protesters target statue of famed Italian journalist who married a 12-year-old in Eritrea. <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/15/europe/milan-statue-montanelli-protesters-intl-scli/index.html>.
- della Porta, D. (2007). *The global justice movement*. Paradigm Publishers.
- della Porta, D. (2015). *Social movements in times of austerity*. Polity Press.
- della Porta, D. (2020). How progressive social movements can save democracy in pandemic times. *Interface: A Journal for and About Social Movements*, 12(1), 355–358.
- della Porta, D., Kriesi, H., & Rucht, D. (1999). *Social movements in a globalizing world*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-27319-5>
- della Porta, D., & Mattoni, A. (Eds.) (2014). *Spreading protest. Social movements in times of crisis*. ECPR Press.
- della Porta, D., Lavizzari, A. & Reiter, H. (2022). The spreading of the Black Lives Matter movement campaign: The Italian case in cross-national perspective. *Sociological Forum*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12818>
- della Porta, D., & Tarrow, S. (Eds.) (2005). *Transnational protest and global activism*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Earl, J., Martin, A., McCarthy, J. D., & Soule, S. A. (2004). The use of newspaper data in the study of collective action. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 30(1)(Paige 1975), 65–80. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.30.012703.110603>
- Eren, B. (2023). Love is over, this is going to be Turkey!': Cathartic resonance between the June 2013 protests in Turkey and Brazil. *Social Movement Studies*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2023.2230140>
- Fleischmann, L., & Steinhilper, E. (2017). The myth of apolitical volunteering for refugees. German welcome culture and a new dispositif of helping. *Social Inclusion*, 5(3), 17–27.
- Florvil, T. (2020). *Mobilizing Black Germany. Afro-German women and the making of a transnational movement*. University of Illinois Press.
- Gillan, K. (2020). Temporality in social movement theory: Vectors and events in the neoliberal timescape. *Social Movement Studies*, 19(5–6), 516–536. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2018.1548965>
- Givan, R. K., Roberts, K. M., & Soule, S. A. (2010). *The diffusion of social movements: Actors, mechanisms, and political effects*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ha, K. N., Al-Samarai, N. L., & Mysorekar, S. (2007). *re/visionen. Postkoloniale Perspektiven von People of Color auf Rassismus, Kulturpolitik und Widerstand in Deutschland*. Unrast.
- Hamann, U., & Lemberg, A. (2010). Ethnizität – zwischen Differenz- und Identifikationen. In A. Nduka-Agwa & L. Hornsscheidt (Eds.), *Rassismus auf gut Deutsch. Ein kritisches Nachschlagewerk zu rassistischen Sprachhandlungen* (pp. 291–298). Brandes und Apsel.

- Hawthorne, C., & Piccolo, P. (2016). *Anti-racism without race. Africa is a country*. Retrieved 15 May 2022 from <https://africasacountry.com/2016/09/anti-racism-without-race-in-italy/>
- Hinger, S., Stern, V., & Daphi, P. (2019). Divided Reactions: Pro- and Anti-Migrant Mobilization in Germany. In A. Rea, M. Martiniello, A. Mazzola, & B. Meuleman (Eds.), *The Refugee Reception Crisis. Polarized Opinions and Mobilizations*. Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles.
- Hutter, S. (2014). Protest event analysis and its offspring. In D. della Porta (Ed.), *Methodological practices in social movement research* (pp. 335–367). Oxford University Press.
- Karakayali, S., & Steinhilper, E. (2018). L' "été de l'accueil" en Allemagne: Les deux versants du bénévolat en temps de "crise des réfugiés". In A. Lendaro, C. Rodier, & Y. L. Vertongen (Eds.), *De la crise des réfugiés à la crise de l'accueil. Frontières, droits, résistances* (pp. 251–271). La Découverte.
- Koopmans, R., & Statham, P. (1999). Political claims analysis: Integrating protest event and political discourse approaches. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 4(2), 203–221. <https://doi.org/10.17813/mai.4.2.d759337060716756>
- Lentin, A. (2004). *Racism and anti-racism in Europe*. Pluto Press.
- Lowery, W. (2017). *They can't kill us all*. The Story of Black Lives Matter (Penguin Bo).
- Lunaria. (2021). *Priorità sociali, partecipazione e pratiche di advocacy: L'esperienza di 20 realtà antirazziste italiane*. Retrieved 23 May, 2022 from <https://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/BABI-Priorità-sociali-partecipazione-e-Pratiche-di-Advocacy-ITALIA.pdf>
- McAdam, D. (1982). *Political process and the development of black insurgency, 1930–1970* (1st edition). University of Chicago Press.
- Milman, N., Ajayi, F., della Porta, D., Doerr, N., Kocyba, P., Lavizzari, A., Reiter, H., Plucienniczak, P., Sommer, M., Steinhilper, E., & Zajak, S. (2021). *Black Lives Matter in Europe. Transnational diffusion, local translation and resonance of anti-racist protest in Germany, Italy, Denmark and Poland*. DeZIM Research Note.
- New York Times. (2019). *Only a locked door stopped a Massacre at a German Synagogue*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/10/world/europe/germany-synagogue-attack.html>
- Pesarini, A. (2020). *Questioni di privilegio: L'Italia e i suoi George Floyd*. <https://www.lavoroculturale.org/questioni-di-privilegio/angelica-pesarini/2020/>
- Roberts, K. M. (2015). *Changing course in Latin America*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511842856>
- Roggeband, C. (2007). Translators and transformers: International inspiration and exchange in social movements. *Social Movement Studies*, 6(3), 245–259. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742830701666947>
- Soule, S. A. (2004). Diffusion processes within and across movements. In D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule, & H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (pp. 294–310). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Soule, S. A. (2013). *Diffusion and scale shift. The Wiley-Blackwell encyclopedia of social and political movements*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470674871.wbespm430>

Soule, S. A., & Roggeband, C. (2018). Diffusion processes within and across movements. In D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule, H. Kriesi, & H. J. McCammon (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell companion to social movements* (pp. 236–251). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119168577.ch13>

Stjepandić, K., Steinhilper, E., & Zajak, S. (2023). Forging plural coalitions in times of polarisation: Protest for an open society in Germany. *German Politics*, 32(3), 469–494. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644008.2021.2023130>

Tarrow, S. (2010). Dynamics of diffusion: Mechanisms, institutions, and scale shift. In R. K. Givan, K. M. Roberts, S. A. Soule, R. K. Givan, K. M. Roberts, & S. A. Soule (Eds.), *The diffusion of social movements* (pp. 204–220). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511761638.012>

Zajak, S., Steinhilper, E., & Sommer, M. (2023). Agenda setting and reframing – black lives matter and media debates on racism in germany. *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23254823.2023.2176335>

Appendix: List of interviews

Interview ID	Country	Date	Language
G1	Germany	13 November 2020	German
G2	Germany	17 November 2020	German
G3	Germany	23 November 2020	German
G4	Germany	4 December 2020	German
G5	Germany	14 December 2020	German
G6	Germany	19 December 2020	German
I1	Italy	2 December 2020	Italian
I2	Italy	4 December 2020	Italian
I3	Italy	5 December 2020	Italian
I4	Italy	11 December 2020	Italian
I5	Italy	22 December 2020	Italian
I6	Italy	30 December 2020	Italian
I7	Italy	2 March 2020	Italian
I8	Italy	6 March 2022	Italian