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Megan O'Byrne & Danielle Endres

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RESEARCH ARTICLE



This Land is Our Land: Protesting to Protect Places on the Margin

Megan O’Byrne^a and Danielle Endres^b

^aDepartment of Communication Studies, Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA, USA; ^bDepartment of Communication, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT, USA

ABSTRACT

In 2008 Tim DeChristopher illegally bid on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) parcels offered for energy exploration leases near National Parks in Utah. DeChristopher and his supporters founded Peaceful Uprising, a climate justice movement, in response to his actions. We analyze mediated news coverage and *in situ* rhetoric gathered via rhetorical fieldwork to examine the ways that Peaceful Uprising combined place-based rhetoric and place-as rhetoric tactics to protect these park-adjacent lands from oil and gas leases and to protect DeChristopher from being convicted for making false bids on the leases. This analysis offers a unique example of place-based protest that is focused on otherwise ignored BLM lands. Moreover, we focus on a place—Salt Lake City—that is not conventionally perceived as a bastion of activism and protest about climate change. Our analysis expands the place in protest framework to considerations of: 1) the convergence of the place-based and place-as rhetoric tactics, and 2) the potential of place in protest appeals to enact different futurities.

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Tim DeChristopher was an environmental activist and a student at the University of Utah in December 2008. Johnson (2009) wrote for *The New York Times* that DeChristopher had grown tired of the “niceties of debate;” he found that environmental lobbying was largely ineffective. In the face of the “urgent and dire” consequences of climate change, DeChristopher decided to take direct action (p. 11). When he arrived at a hotly contested Bureau of Land Management (BLM) oil and gas lease auction in Salt Lake City he intended to metaphorically “wave a red flag” drawing attention to the opening of lands that were previously unavailable for resource exploration (Johnson, 2011, p. 15). Many of these BLM parcels were national park-adjacent lands in Utah being offered for exploratory oil and gas rights leases at the tail end of the George W. Bush administration (see Figures 1–3). While his initial intention was to “cause as much of a disruption” as possible—he thought about “yelling something or throwing a shoe”—what he ended up doing was much more significant (Johnson, 2009, p. 16). After mistakenly receiving a bidding paddle, he decided to “block legitimate bidders” from winning leases (Magill, 2009b, p. 12). In what would later be called an act of monkeywrenching, DeChristopher used paddle 70 to purchase 14 lease parcels spanning over 22,000 acres at the price of nearly \$1.8 million (Magill, 2009a). He said he was motivated to do so when he “saw a friend from his church openly weeping at the sterile transfer of beloved red rock lands away from the public trust and into the hands of energy giants” (DeChristopher, 2015). DeChristopher was swiftly arrested at the auction for making false bids and he defended his actions as a form of civil disobedience to a government doing nothing to address the climate crisis (DeChristopher, 2015). Although President Obama’s Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar voided 77 of the leases from the auction, including 11 of the leases that DeChristopher won, DeChristopher

was still tried in federal court, convicted of two felonies, and sentenced to two years in prison, a \$10,000 fine, and three years of probation.

DeChristopher immediately received support from local friends, environmentalists, fellow members of the Salt Lake City Universalist Unitarian church, and national environmental organizations. DeChristopher and supporters founded Peaceful Uprising (PeaceUp), a Salt Lake City-based climate action coalition that supported and protested on behalf of DeChristopher throughout his legal proceedings (DeChristopher, 2015). PeaceUp identifies as a climate justice movement working to “combat the climate crisis and build a just, healthy world” (Peaceful Uprising, 2011). While PeaceUp has gone on to organize around other climate and energy issues, we focus on its inception as a group of people catalyzed by DeChristopher’s actions as Bidder 70.

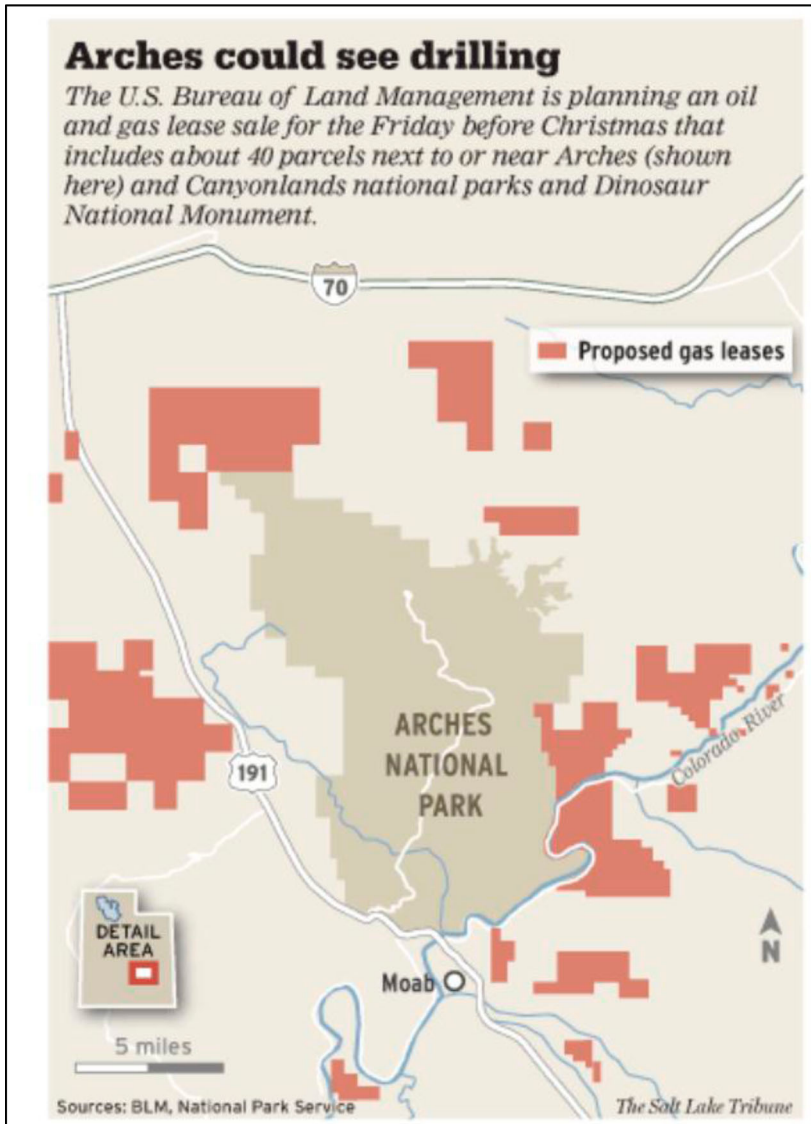


Figure 1. The darkened areas represent the potential drilling parcels offered by BLM, many of which border or are in the direct vicinity of Arches National Park (Repanshek, 2008).

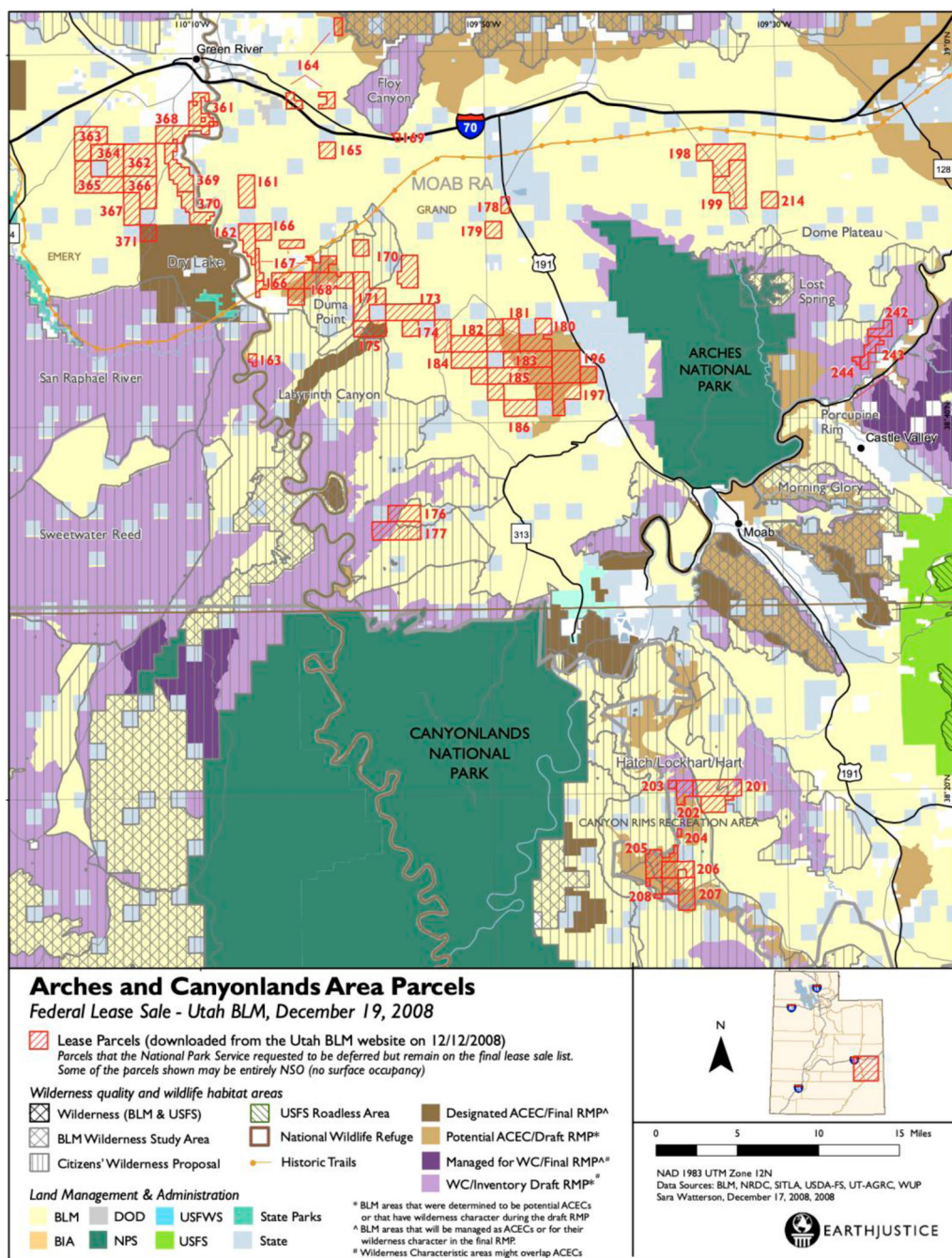


Figure 2. This map, created by Earth Justice, shows all of the parcels near Arches and Canyonlands that were up for auction on December 19, 2008 (Appears in Berkes, 2009).

In this essay, we demonstrate how place—in the ways protest was performed both *in* and *about* place—played a critical role in PeaceUp’s campaign to support DeChristopher. We begin with a discussion of how place functions rhetorically, particularly within environmental activism. We then argue for the value of extending Endres and Senda-Cook’s (2011) place in protest framework to

Utah Scenic Region Also Prized For Oil And Gas

The Bush administration tried to issue oil and gas leases on federal land in Utah near Dinosaur National Monument, Desolation Canyon, Arches National Park, Canyonlands National Park and Nine Mile Canyon, an area rich in ancient Indian rock art.



Credits: Nelson Hsu, Howard Berkes/NPR

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[Student In Bogus Oil, Gas Bids Faces Prosecution](#)

College student Tim DeChristopher bid \$1.79 million at a federal auction of oil and gas leases in sensitive areas with no intent or ability to pay. This week, the Interior Department voided the leases, but the Justice Department may prosecute him.

Figure 3. A map created by NPR to show the general locations of the parks and monuments near the oil and gas leases up for auction on December 19, 2008 (Appears in Berkes, 2009).

consider convergences of place-based and place-as rhetoric tactics and future-oriented constructions of place. After highlighting our rhetorical fieldwork methodological approach, we offer an extended analysis of how: 1) mediated place-based texts argued for protection of the BLM parcels as scenic, pristine, and sensitive park-adjacent places where oil and gas development should not be undertaken; and 2) Salt Lake City-based PeaceUp protests used place-as-rhetoric to reshape notions of the appropriateness of climate protest in Utah. Our analysis demonstrates how PeaceUp simultaneously appealed for protection of scenic but threatened “pristine” places in Utah and temporarily reconstructed downtown Salt Lake City’s Federal Courthouse into a place of protest. We conclude with the implications of tactically deploying both place-based and place-as rhetoric in one environmental movement, thereby contributing to understanding the multifaceted role that place can play in environmental activism.

Environmental place in protest

Environmental communication scholars have long recognized the importance of place, place attachment, and sense of place as mediating factors in human relationships with ecosystems (e.g. Brady, 2011; Cantrill, 1998; Carbaugh & Cerulli, 2013; Endres et al., 2014; Ewalt, 2011; Goggin, 2013; Hutchins & Stormer, 2013; Rai & Druschke, 2018; Singer, 2011; Spurlock, 2009). Similarly, rhetorical scholars have long recognized the close relationship between rhetoric and place (e.g. Blair, 2001; Blair et al., 2010; Chirindo, 2016; Dickinson, 1997; Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011; Towns, 2016; West, 2010), leading Middleton et al. (2015) to explain that all rhetoric is emplaced, not simply in terms of place as a context but more importantly that place is a “co-participant in all rhetorical acts” (p. 95). Our framework assumes that places are forms of material rhetoric (Blair, 1999) and corporeal geographies (Chirindo, 2016; McAlister, 2016) that enact, encourage, and produce “consequential rhetorical performances” (Endres et al., 2014, p. 125). Building from these assumptions, we add to the body of literature that analyzes how environmental and environmental

justice movements rhetorically construct particular places ranging from “pristine” wilderness to toxic wastelands (e.g. Cox, 1982; Endres et al., 2014; Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011; Peeples, 2011; Pezzullo, 2007).

In this essay, we expand understanding of the role of place in environmental social movements by examining the convergence of place-based and place-as rhetoric tactics in the lifecycle of one environmental movement campaign. PeaceUp rhetorically mobilized two particular places: the place that the movement sought to protect—park-adjacent lands in Utah—and the place where the majority of the protests happened—a free speech zone (FSZ) across the street from the Federal Courthouse where DeChristopher was tried and convicted. Appeals based on these places sought to protect park-adjacent BLM lands from oil and gas development that would exacerbate the climate crisis and to defend the actions DeChristopher took to protect those lands and combat the climate crisis. PeaceUP rhetorically sutured these two places—materially distant from one another but incredibly important to PeaceUp’s goals—together with place-based and place-as rhetoric appeals that gave the places a continuity and contiguity that knotted their fates together.

Places are “particular locations that are semi-bounded, a combination of material and symbolic qualities, and embodied” (Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011, p. 259). Places are identifiable entities—a national park, a BLM parcel, the Federal Courthouse, or jail—with permeable boundaries (visible or not) that enable an inhabitant of that place to say, “I am here, not there.” Of course, boundaries can look and act differently; the courthouse has clear boundaries, the building itself is well defined, identifiable, and looming. The FSZ across the street also had clear boundaries set up to contain protesters. The parcels, while clearly demarcated by the BLM, are “semi-bounded” such that their purpose and value can be “a matter of debate, change over time, or be re-drawn” (Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011, p. 259). The parcels that DeChristopher sought to protect were dominated by capitalist norms of resource production and use, specifically in relation to oil and gas development under the George W. Bush administration’s energy independence plan (which climate advocates pointed out would only increase greenhouse gas emissions). Yet, these same parcels also carried a variety of different meanings for wilderness advocates, Indigenous people and nations, ranchers, and local populations. PeaceUp created what Endres and Senda-Cook (2011) call places in protest through building on pre-existing meanings, challenging existing meanings, and inventing new meanings for these places, even if temporarily.

Endres and Senda-Cook (2011) define place-based arguments as those that “discursively invoke images or memories of a place to support an argument,” calling forth “non-physically present places” such as the parks or parcels for remote audiences (Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011, p. 258, 265). Mediated representations of BLM parcels and their nearby national park companions hearken images of an idealized place set aside for future preservation and incite frustration at the idea of endangering that place for resource development. The idea of developing park-adjacent parcels in a way that would further contribute to the climate crisis was enough to incite both DeChristopher and PeaceUp to take collective action. Place-as rhetoric “assumes that the very place in which a protest occurs is a rhetorical performance that is part of the message of the movement” (Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011, pp. 258–59). Protestors at the FSZ during DeChristopher’s criminal and sentencing trials transformed Salt Lake City into a place of environmental and climate protest. By engaging in emplaced protest in the FSZ, protestors disrupted conventional ideas of Utah as a place where protest, particularly protest about climate change, rarely happens. As such, PeaceUp temporarily constructed these places in protest to not only protect park-adjacent BLM lands from future oil and gas leases but also to re-envision a future without ever-worsening climate change.

Our analysis demonstrates how place-based rhetoric and place-as rhetoric tactics can work together in a single movement, offering two expansions to the place in protest framework. First, Endres and Senda-Cook (2011) present place-based rhetoric and place-as rhetoric as distinct rhetorical tactics, yet they focus mainly on theorizing and demonstrating place-as rhetoric. While Endres and Senda-Cook note that movements use both place-based and place-as rhetoric tactics, they do not analyze how these tactics can work together (or against each other) in one movement. Our

analysis expands their work by demonstrating the fruitfulness of specifically examining the convergence of both tactics in one campaign. Second, we argue that place in protest appeals have a vital temporal impact on the rhetoric of collectivity in the present and future tenses, as in, we should gather our efforts around this place *now* in order to protect it for the *future*. While Endres and Senda-Cook (2011) focus on the relationship between temporality and place along the vector of permanence and ephemerality, we look at another vector: past-present-future orientation. As such, our analysis demonstrates how movements rhetorically construct place not just to invoke memory but also to incite action for a collective future. This move is already underway in the discourse of activists and protestors and merits further attention from rhetorical scholars, particularly because the preponderance of research on place and rhetoric is focused on memory places as a window into the past (e.g. Dickinson et al., 2010) as opposed to place as a window into potential collective futures.

Our analysis uses both conventional textual analysis of news media and rhetorical fieldwork, specifically participatory critical rhetoric, to collect and analyze the protest rhetoric of PeaceUp (e.g. McHendry et al., 2014; Middleton et al., 2015).¹ Place serves as the artifact of this study in two ways. First, we investigate mediated texts to analyze the place-based rhetoric of PeaceUp drawn from accounts of DeChristopher's saga. PeaceUp never physically took its protest activities to the BLM parcels, but these mediated accounts shaped how readers were asked to envision them. Mediated texts were collected using a LexisNexis search of terms related to DeChristopher and PeaceUp that yielded eighty pages of text from both mainstream sources (e.g. *Salt Lake Tribune* and *Deseret News*) and non-mainstream sources that focus on environmental reporting, such as *Platts Oilgram News*, *Inside Energy with Federal Lands*, and *Natural Gas Week*. Through close reading of place-based appeals in these texts, three themes—scenic, pristine, and sensitive—emerged that conceptualize the land as worthy of protection because of its analogical extension to national parks and wilderness places. Second, our analysis employed participant-observation at the 2011 protest events in Salt Lake City to analyze the ways that PeaceUp used place-as rhetoric to rhetorically reconstruct Salt Lake City as a place of climate protest, allowing us to fully experience and record practices of place in protest that would never be fully reported in the media (Pezzullo, 2007).² Our fieldnotes and other texts collected *in situ* capture fleeting moments when protesters construct and re-create the places in which they protest, in this case, by projecting Salt Lake City as a place of climate and land-protection protest.

The places of protest in Peaceful Uprising

One of the factors that brings these two seemingly incongruous places—BLM lands in Utah and the Federal Courthouse in Salt Lake City—together is the federal government. While BLM lands in Utah were stolen from Ute, Paiute, Hopi, and Zuni peoples, the parcels were under the jurisdiction of the BLM at the time of the auction and are governed by federal land and resource development policies. The federal government's public lands policies, inaction on climate change, and ramp up of support for oil and gas development under the George W. Bush administration is the status quo against which PeaceUp protested. It began when DeChristopher showed up at the BLM auction in Salt Lake City to protest oil and gas leases in what PeaceUp activists describe as a last-ditch effort by the Bush Administration to bolster oil and gas development as a part of the 2005 Energy Policy Act's affirmation of fossil fuels (O'Neil, 2009). This movement that played out within these two places in protest, emerged in reaction to an urgency about climate change and a fear that more federally-sanctioned oil and gas development could severely limit the ability to prevent devastating impacts from the climate chaos that would be both worsened and hastened by that development. These PeaceUp protests across two sites of federal jurisdiction had enormous implications for the future of public land, fossil fuels, and climate change.

PeaceUp's campaign for DeChristopher emerged during a particular moment in the broader struggle over climate change. The climate movement had been building momentum over the course of the Bush administration, including a specific turn to civil disobedience tactics advocated by

groups like 350.org and Sierra Club. Climate activism gained wider recognition and reach following the awarding of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize to Al Gore and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Although DeChristopher's actions happened in the last month of President Bush's term, his federal trial occurred in 2009 and was one of the first major climate issues to emerge in Obama's presidency. Supporters hoped that DeChristopher's "lesser-of-two-evils" defense—arguing that while it was wrong to break the law by bidding, not bidding would have caused far more harm—might set a precedent for aggressive responses to climate change under a new administration (Sands, 2010, p. 10). As such, a unique monkeywrenching tactic, and hope in the new president contributed to DeChristopher's trial being widely reported by national news media and supported by key environmental activists such as Naomi Klein, Bill McKibben, and James Hanson. Moreover, DeChristopher's act of civil disobedience and the ensuing trial, catalyzed an increase in climate-related protest and action in Salt Lake City. While not entirely absent prior to his trial in 2011, the energy of the PeaceUp protests not only felt different to us as residents but also amplified the voice of climate protest in SLC to a national audience.

While we focus on the BLM parcel lands and the protests at the FSZ as two prominent places in protest in PeaceUp's campaign, these are not the only places in the campaign. The site of the BLM auction is important not only because it catalyzed the PeaceUp movement but also because it is the site of an emplaced protest that temporarily reconstructed what had often been mundane land auctions into a place in protest that confused bidders as DeChristopher drove up prices (Jonzen, 2009). Moreover, there may be other places and forms of place-based or place-as-rhetoric tactics in PeaceUp's rhetoric. For example, the Unitarian Universalist Church in Salt Lake City was a gathering place for activists to sing and vigil together before the trial began and the PeaceUp headquarters was a working place for making signs, supporting arrestees, and other internal activities.³ These other places are supporting places to PeaceUp's central arguments in the campaign to support DeChristopher.

As we will demonstrate, PeaceUp's place-based and place-as rhetoric tactics provide one lens through which to understand these places. While this lens accomplished a significant reframing of places in protest, it also reflects the values, positionalities, purposes, and imagined futures of PeaceUp—a primarily White environmental and climate justice movement that is shaped by relations of race, class, gender, geography, politics and religion that circulate in Salt Lake City and in Utah. PeaceUp's two-fold construction of BLM lands and the Federal Courthouse as *places in protest* grafts particular meanings to these places for the purpose of preventing oil and gas development and addressing the climate crisis. As is well known in theories of place, while there may be dominant meanings of places, there is never just one meaning. Rather, as Endres and Senda-Cook (2011) note, places are sites of contestation over meaning. The next two sections analyze PeaceUp's place-based and place-as rhetoric tactics as a lens that is both enabling and constraining.

BLM parcels as place-based rhetoric

The BLM parcels being auctioned in December 2008 were in what Ute, Hopi, Zuni, and Paiute people know as ongoing homelands and settlers know as Utah. PeaceUp's place-based rhetorical tactic starts with the assumption that these are federal public lands, bypassing the government's ongoing occupation of Indigenous lands. Within this assumption, PeaceUp uses argument by analogy to posit that the BLM parcels are similar enough to the adjacent national park lands to merit similar protections, including prohibiting oil and gas development. The complicated context of contestation over public lands in the American West leads to competing conceptions of the meaning of BLM lands as places that are shaped profoundly by race, class, gender, politics, religion, and geographic location.

The BLM manages a total of 245 million acres in the U.S., of which about 22.9 million acres are in Utah, or approximately 42% of the state landmass. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) directs BLM "to carry out a dual mandate: that of managing public land for multiple

uses while conserving natural, historical, and cultural resources” (Bureau of Land Management, “What”). The FLPMA charges the BLM “to administer public lands ‘on the basis of multiple use and sustained yield’ of resources.” Multiple use includes: “renewable energy development (solar, wind, other); conventional energy development (oil and gas, coal); livestock grazing; hardrock mining (gold, silver, other), timber harvesting; and outdoor recreation (such as camping, hunting, rafting, and off-highway vehicle driving)” (Bureau of Land Management, “What,” n.p). According to the Utah State BLM Office, Utah public lands “not only provide minerals, energy, and livestock forage, but also natural, historical and cultural resources that the agency is charged with protecting. In addition, Utah’s public lands offer incomparable opportunities to experience solitude and enjoy outdoor recreation,” reflecting the dual mission of the BLM (Bureau of Land Management, “Utah”).

The National Park Service Organic Act of 1916 lays out a different mission for national parks:

to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. (Organic Act of, 1916, 2015)

Park land, by wont of being set aside for “unimpaired” enjoyment, is off-limits for resource development. That is not to say that parks are not commodified in some ways, but that energy extraction is expressly verboten. National parks, then, are differently managed than BLM lands, and PeaceUp sought to capitalize on their proximity to national parks in order to analogically extend the protections of national parks to BLM parcels in the present and future.

The BLM parcels for auction on December 19, 2008 were noticeably grouped around several important landmarks: Arches and Canyonlands National Parks in southeast Utah, Dinosaur National Monument in northeast Utah, an archeological site on a patchwork of public and private land called Nine Mile Canyon, and the National Historic Landmark Desolation Canyon (see [Figure 3](#)). Yet, the parcels that raised the most concern among protesters at the BLM auction were the ones located near Arches and Canyonlands National Parks (see [Figures 1 & 2](#)). While there are other portions of BLM land in Utah that hold oil and gas development leases, both the proximity of these lands to national parks and the potential for more oil and gas extraction to intensify the climate crisis catalyzed protest to protect these lands. The parcels were not merely empty lands waiting for meaning to be imbued; they were lands with a range of preexisting meanings and already engaged in multiple uses including outdoor recreation, grazing, energy extraction, mining, and historic/cultural resources (Bureau of Land Management, “Utah”). While our research did not surface the exact ways these parcels were used prior to the auction, a map created by Earth Justice ([Figure 2](#)) focused on the parcels near Arches and Canyonlands indicates that these parcels spanned a variety of uses, including areas designated as “Areas of Critical Environmental Concern,” having “Wilderness Characteristics,” and falling within the “Citizens’ Wilderness Proposal.”

Of course, public land in the American West—including National Monuments, National Parks, wilderness-designated lands, and BLM lands—is controversial. Conflicts over public lands in the West emerge repeatedly, with sometimes violent outcomes (e.g. the 2016 standoff at Malheur Wildlife Refuge). These conflicts involve differences between stakeholder communities (e.g. environmentalists, Indigenous Nations, ranchers, anti-government militias) and ideologies (e.g. progressive/conservative, role of government, religion, views of race/class/gender). Environmentalists and wilderness preservationists—often made up of urban White “elites,” in this case from Salt Lake City or Park City—celebrate the large amount of public land in the West and rally to protect it from resource extraction and other forms of degradation while also seeking to preserve it for recreation and solitude. Indigenous Nations seek to decolonize, reclaim occupied and stolen Western lands, express their sovereignty, and preserve their relationality with lands (e.g. Whyte, 2016). Working in opposition to environmentalists, members of the modern day equivalents to the Wise Use movement of the 1980s-90s decry the preponderance of Federal public land in Western states and work to return these lands to private ownership and local control, often allying with resource extraction and land development companies (e.g. Peebles, 2005). At times overlapping

with the Wise Use perspective are rural—often conservative and working class—people who live and work in areas targeted by environmentalists for preservation and see the land as resource for work and as a site for recreation. Conflicts may also involve members of the LDS church who view parts of Utah as sacred and God-given or Christian militia groups, such as the Bundy family that practice a form of Mormon fundamentalism. All these communities claim entitlements to the land—albeit expressed through different values and positions. This messy entanglement of communities and ideologies not only results in fierce and potentially violent contests over public lands, but also reflect different meanings and uses of place. The struggle over the particular BLM parcels at the auction in December 2008 cannot be separated from this larger context of public lands as sites of controversy and polysemy in the American West.

As DeChristopher's story broke in the media, several sympathetic accounts told his story. While mediated accounts do not represent the original rhetoric of PeaceUp (except in direct quotes), they do offer a remediated version of the movement's goals. Our analysis revealed three interconnected characterizations of the BLM parcels as scenic, sensitive, and pristine and thus worthy of the same protections applied to national park lands. Oil and gas development on these parcels would mean visible, audible, and smell-able intrusion into protected park lands that would negatively impact the more-than-human communities and lead to what Senda-Cook (2012) has called "experiential degradation" for park-goers (p. 130). For some audiences, particularly those engaged in environmental or wilderness preservation movements, this analogic extension to national parks builds on a pre-existing meaning of these places as already park-like. For other audiences, this place-based rhetoric might introduce a new meaning for lands that were never considered prior to DeChristopher's actions. For yet other audiences, PeaceUp's construction of place challenges meanings of the land based in stakeholder communities and ideologies that view these same places as resource, employment, livelihood, homeland, or sacred. The BLM parcels in this case already held a variety of meanings linked to the complicated history of contested public land in the American West, such that PeaceUp's argument simultaneously built on, and temporarily reconstructed, pre-existing meanings.

Rhetorically Inventing the scenic vista

The parcels under contest at the 2008 auction were rhetorically reconstructed as important to the proper present and future scenic appreciation of the nearby national parks. Sands and Magill (2009) wrote for *Platts Inside Energy* that an early argument against leasing the parcels was that "development would harm air quality and scenic views in two nearby national parks"—Arches and Canyonlands (p. 9). This specific argument, with those specific words, was repeated in at least six *Platts* publications in 2009–10 alone (see Hansen, 2009; Hansen & Karey, 2009; Magill, 2009b; Sands, 2009, 2010; Sands & Magill, 2009). The sheer repetition of this specific wording, most often attributed to environmental groups, made the scenic argument the most recurrent theme throughout the media coverage.

Two other notable recurrences of the scenic framing occurred in *The Washington Post*. In covering the initial auction, Vick (2009) wrote that DeChristopher ended up winning leases for "22,000 acres in the scenic southeast corner of Utah" (p. A02). Once many of the leases were cancelled in an after-the-fact decision by Interior Secretary Salazar, Eilperin (2009) noted that that decision was based on how oil/gas extraction would "blight Utah's scenic southeastern corner" (p. A02). In both cases, "scenic" functions as an overlay term for all the lands in that part of the state regardless of park/non-park designation.

Writing for the *National Parks Traveler* website Repanshek (2008), added specificity to the scenic argument questioning what would happen in the parks if leases and exploration moved forward. He asked, "should one day the views through Delicate Arch and other 'windows' in the park be of drilling rigs, of oil-field trucks rumbling hither and there, of illuminated drilling pads?" Repanshek further questioned even the long-term existence of the natural arches asking, "Should there be

concern that ‘thumper trucks’ employed to search out petroleum reserves just might hasten the downfall of some of those arches?” (see also, Park Rangers for Our Lands). Even though drilling rigs would be operating on BLM lands, these texts suggest that scenic experiences in the parks would be qualitatively impacted in a future with oil and gas exploration.

The scenic analogy posits that the parcels, though technically existing outside of the semi-bounded place of the parks, are not visibly distinguishable enough from the parks to exclude them from the protections provided to the parks themselves. While the limits and bounds of park lands are apparent in government and survey documents, there is no such distinct clarification for visitors. Just as Half Dome in Yosemite is constructed as an “icon of pristine wilderness” through the “confluence of multiple discourses,” so too were the lands made available by the BLM for oil/gas leases reconstructed rhetorically as scenic icons in danger of degradation (DeLuca & Demo, 2000, p. 244). The argument suggests that in order to preserve the value of parks as scenic places, we must also protect surrounding lands from non-scenic oil and gas development. That development would not only disrupt the scenery in the short term present as large drilling rigs give way to smaller derricks, but also in the future as the derricks remain in place, roads for heavy equipment remain, and the eventual further degradation of air quality caused by the burning of the fossil fuels extracted from those very places.

Rhetorically Inventing sensitive lands

Arguing that the lands need protection based on their “sensitive” nature is another example of how the media coverage claimed the umbrella protections afforded to national parks should also be provided for park-adjacent parcels. Media coverage created an enthymematic parallel between “sensitivity” and “needing protection,” as seen in Magill’s (2009c) article in *Platts Oilgram News*: “Environmental groups complained that the sale, held in the closing days of the George W. Bush administration, improperly included parcels near Arches and Canyonlands National Parks, Dinosaur National Monument and other environmentally sensitive places” (p. 7). Because the lands are physically proximal, the argument goes, the sensitivity of the lands bordering the parcels must be taken into consideration.

The reconstruction of the park-adjacent BLM parcels as sensitive, while clearly an attempt to protect these lands, is definitively unclear. Magill’s article, for example, does not make clear what exactly it means to be sensitive. Further, Johnson (2011) refers to the “perceived risk to sensitive lands in southern Utah” (p. 14). This construction, while not explaining the exact sensitive nature of these lands, alludes to the potentially subjective nature of “perceiving” what it means to be environmentally sensitive. In their reporting of the lease cancellations Hansen and Karey (2009) refer to the parcels as “environmentally sensitive desert lands in Utah” (p. 1). In reporting on that decision for *Platts Inside Energy with Federal Lands*, Hansen and Karey further indicated that Interior Secretary Salazar removed the parcels in order to protect “signature landscapes and cultural resources” while being “thoughtful and balanced” about oil and gas production (Hansen & Karey, 2009, p. 1). This construction of sensitivity of lands implies a connection to signature landscapes and having cultural value, thus linking scenic and sensitive. In this argument, sensitive lands, regardless of whether they are BLM or national park, all require the same type of treatment, thereby disallowing oil and gas development in the present and future.

Rhetorically Inventing pristine ... and exploited lands

A pristine place assumes somewhere untouched by humans, such as designated wilderness lands. While imaginings of pristine wilderness are problematic in their erasure of Indigenous inhabitants (e.g. Solnit, 2000; Woods, 2017), the idea of a pristine wilderness is ingrained in culture and policy as DeLuca and Demo (2000) note: “Viewing nature as pristine wilderness apart from humanity becomes cultural convention and environmental policy” (p. 254). Wilderness as unsullied, perfect,

and in its original shape; of course, is also impossible (Cronon, 1996). This vision of a somehow untouched land erases the very real history of the place and the people, and more-than-human creatures, who have inhabited it for millennia. Even if, somehow, there were a place yet unexplored it would still be touched by air quality, runoff, and climate issues all caused by human industry and development. Indeed, the BLM parcels under contention were not unsullied. Yet, media accounts frame these lands as “pristine” based on their proximity to national parks.

Eilperin (2009) described the BLM parcels as “near pristine areas such as Nine Mile Canyon, Arches National Park and Dinosaur National Monument,” correctly marking the parcels as separate places—*near* the “pristine” but not blatantly pristine themselves (p. A02). Yet, Sands and Magill (2009) do not differentiate park and non-park places, but rather claim that the parcels are pristine in their summary of DeChristopher’s motive as stopping “the exploitation of pristine wilderness for oil and gas development” (p. 9). In invoking these places as pristine, there are differing valuing structures such that some lands deserve to be, or to remain, pristine and others do not. *The Washington Post* noted that DeChristopher chose to drive up the prices in order to “reflect a little more of the true costs” of resource extraction and use (Vick, 2009, p. A02). DeChristopher was incensed that parcels would often sell for \$1-2 per acre (Gordon, 2011). His continuous bids drove the price of his initial parcels up to \$495 per acre (Jonzen, 2009, p. 9). The incredibly low initial cost of the leases was a perceived insult to not only the “pristine” lands themselves but also to the widespread future degradation that results from extracting, refining, and burning fossil fuels.

This series of place-based arguments reconstructs park-adjacent BLM parcels as scenic, sensitive, and pristine. All of these BLM parcels were at one point or another, for one reason or another, bounded outside of the parks. Meaning was inscribed upon those lands: they were near the parks but not parks themselves, close but not protected from resource development. Yet, DeChristopher and PeaceUp viewed these lands differently, as just as scenic, sensitive, and pristine as the national park lands next door and therefore worthy of protection from oil and gas development. This alternate meaning of place animated media coverage of DeChristopher and PeaceUp, offering readers a way to see these lands in line with the movement’s goals. While we will argue in the conclusion that this construction of the land succeeded for some audiences, it is crucial to understand this construction is a rhetoric of Whiteness and settler entitlement that conflicts with PeaceUp’s identification as a climate justice group.

Place-as-Rhetoric

In response to DeChristopher’s arrest and trial, Salt Lake City became a site of collective action that reimagined otherwise mundane cityscapes in a conservative state as places of protest in which place was collectively invented, interrupted, and tactically questioned. PeaceUp, in their protest events during DeChristopher’s trials, used the place-as rhetoric tactic to build on the “pre-existing meaning of a place” and “temporarily reconstructed” the city into a place in protest (Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011, p. 266). The PeaceUp protesters built on preexisting place meaning by encamping at the temporary FSZ set up across the street from the Federal Courthouse, also known as Exchange Place. The courthouse is a symbol of federal governmental powers that protesters found to be wrongfully prosecuting DeChristopher for acting to create a livable future. Holding protests at that site placed the primarily White protesters in direct proximity to the trials with hopes that their protesting/singing voices could literally be heard inside the courtroom as the proceedings unfolded.

Singing a modified version of Woody Guthrie’s “Union Maid,” protestors literally performed place-as rhetoric by specifically making Utah as a place of protest. The song was retitled “Oh, You Can’t Scare Me” and replaced “union” with “movement.” The lyrics include:

//I’m working for the planet//

//I'm singing at the Court House//

//I'm shouting in Exchange Place//

//We're rising up in Utah!//

The performance of emplaced singing actively remade Exchange Place into a place in protest where collective action became reasonable, necessary, and resilient. Through our presence, we experienced this shift from what is otherwise a legal, urban, governmental place to a site of active resistance. As we sang those lyrics collectively with other participants, "We're rising up in Utah" was emphasized with a tonal questioning that comes with an interrobang: Are you sure this is Utah?! To sing and hear others shout that lyric sounded both shocking and questioning, funny and disbelieving, as though we were simultaneously asserting and asking: this is something that can be done in Utah? As that verse repeated, we observed song leaders with lilting voices, as if to ask, "really? Utah?" while also shrugging their shoulders, palms upward as if to say, "I guess this is Utah." In writing and singing this lyric, PeaceUp song leaders reimagined Utah as a place for, and worthy of, contestation; a place whose future was unsure but worth fighting for.

This emplaced tactic recognizes that Salt Lake City is not perceived as a likely place for protest. Of course, protest has happened in Utah prior to PeaceUp, but the State is more often recognized for its peaceful religious community, conservative politics, proximity to skiing opportunities, and beautiful landscapes. In placing themselves not only near the Federal Courthouse but also in the most urban of Utah sites the protesters rewrote the narrative of protest in Utah. That Utahns would not sit idly by while injustices were done either to DeChristopher or to their lands, marked a change in the meaning of Utah—one that received national attention across a variety of media outlets. Of course, we are neither arguing that everyone in Utah agreed with the protests nor that this was a permanent shift in place meaning for Salt Lake City and Utah. Rather, this movement's emplaced place-as rhetoric tactics contributed to a temporary reconstruction of the meaning of Salt Lake City and Utah as places of climate activism.

PeaceUp also "reconstructed" city streets into places of protest. On the morning of February 28, 2011, PeaceUp marched through the downtown streets of Salt Lake City leading protesters from Pioneer Park—a well-known downtown park—to the FSZ. Like many other peaceful marches, this (fully permitted and policed) interruption of traffic during the morning commute transformed routine transit into a waiting game as drivers were re-routed or were stuck waiting for the joyous, colorful, loud, singing marchers to proceed. On that cold February morning, we walked with marchers who wore orange sashes over their winter coats as a sign of their resistance. Seemingly every third person held up a double-sided sign on a thin piece of wood that had been spray painted with a simple stencil of the number "70," DeChristopher's bidding paddle number. There were dances and cheers, songs and chants, hula hoopers, and cheerleaders on the route. Although signs, chants, and cheers are all expected aspects of a protest march, Endres and Senda-Cook (2011) argue that protest marches like this one are forms of place-as-rhetoric, a temporary reconstruction of the meaning of place that disrupts conventional understandings. Protestors sang the many verses of "This Land is Your Land," including the more subversive lines, to not only assert their right to take to the streets but also to reference that BLM lands are public lands, *our lands*. Likewise, participants protested oil and gas development by singing "Big Yellow Taxi," calling forth images of the inevitable loss that occurs when we have //paved paradise and put up a parking lot//, connecting the emplaced protest march in Salt Lake City to the BLM lands that DeChristopher sought to protect from the metaphorical parking lot of oil and gas rigs.

After DeChristopher's sentence was handed down on July 26, 2011, PeaceUp protesters and core supporters were visibly devastated. Crying, as the sentence was announced, protesters began zip tying themselves to the handrailing at the entrance to the Federal Courthouse. As DeChristopher was made an example of, and as the judge intended to interrupt similar future actions by jailing DeChristopher—his supporters wanted to make it known that he did not act alone. They were

willing to face arrest to support DeChristopher and his actions. When a nearby police officer informed the group that they were welcome to remain in front of the courthouse and that no police intervention would come of their actions, PeaceUp increased the stakes.

When arrests did not happen on the steps of the courthouse, PeaceUp protesters took to the streets to interrupt transit. In this non-permitted, non-police sanctioned flocking to the street, singing PeaceUp protesters, including one of us, occupied a busy downtown intersection during afternoon rush hour. They were “out-of-place,” acting as a rogue entity intent on drawing attention to their disgust with the outcome of the trial (Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011). Protestors spread themselves across car, bus, and light-rail paths blocking traffic in all directions. Sitting zip tied to one another in the street and singing, using their bodies in place to interrupt daily activities and withstanding the ire of interrupted commuters who honked and hurled insults, protesters elected to be arrested and stand demonstrably with DeChristopher. During the street protest, Guthrie’s lyrics again narrated the unsanctioned protesters actions. A single repeat of the re-written “Union Maid” chorus-only version of the song lent some bravery to the protesters:

//Oh, you can’t scare me,

I’m sticking with the movement

I’m sticking with the movement

I’m sticking with the movement

‘till we all breathe free//

Remaining with the movement, even in fear, in hopes of gaining a better future, one with cleaner air and a vision of scenic, sensitive, and pristine lands untainted by oil and gas exploration motivated the singers.

Many more protesters remained behind on the sidewalk, not everyone was willing or able to face the possible consequences that would come from this act of civil disobedience. They led songs, held a drum line, and communicated with the many angry commuters. Police presence increased and officers implored protesters to move off the street, simply protest on the sidewalk, and just be less of a hindrance, to avoid getting arrested. After more than an hour, twenty-six protesters, including one of us, were removed peaceably from the street by city police (Loomis, 2011). Note again that this equally public and peaceable arrest was likely made possible because of the predominant Whiteness of the protesters. In the forced interruption of traffic followed by arrests, these city streets transported ideas and protest rather than transporting commuters, reconstructing streets from places of movement to places of disruption and stoppage, illustrating an increase in the stakes of climate protest in Utah (see Endres et al., 2014).

Peaceful Uprising pursued both place-based and place-as rhetoric tactics in their quest to protect BLM lands from development and protect DeChristopher from going to prison. Protests at the far-away parcels themselves were not feasible for logistical, travel, and visibility reasons. Shedding light on the problem in the city brought about an entirely different politic of visibility—ready access to the media, obvious demonstration, intrusion on the routines of the local population—than a protest at the very rural and uninhabited parcels themselves could deliver. The use of place-as rhetoric in Salt Lake City combined with place-based rhetoric helped to shift power away from the silencing practices used to keep the parcels themselves hidden and quiet. Simultaneously using these two tactics allowed PeaceUp to not only argue that Utah is a place where protest *can* happen, but it is also a place that deserves to be protected now and in the future.

Conclusion

In response to Endres and Senda-Cook’s (2011) call for “further examination of how social movements use place rhetorically” (p. 277), our analysis expands the place in protest framework to

considerations of: 1) the convergence of the place-based and place-as rhetoric tactics, and 2) the potential of place in protest appeals to enact different futurities. First, our analysis shows that examining place-based and place-as rhetoric tactics in combination is productive in evaluating the complicated role of place in one movement's campaign. Second, while Endres and Senda-Cook (2011) think about place in protest in terms of permanence and ephemerality, one vector between place and temporality, we shift to an understanding of place in protest along another vector: past, present, future. Much of the rhetorical research on place and collectivity hearkens a specific past, whether particular public places where events requiring memory happened—battles, historical speeches, tragic events—or museums and memorials erected for the purpose of collecting memories (e.g. Blair, 1999; Blair & Michel, 2000; Dickinson et al., 2010). Our analysis demonstrates that place-based and place-as rhetoric also make important claims about the future through reimagined and reconstructed futures of often overlooked places. PeaceUp enacts the vital impact in the present and future tenses, as in, we should gather our efforts around this place *now* in order to protect it for the *future*.

Beyond these findings, we offer two implications from our analysis. First, pursuing both place-based rhetoric and place-as rhetoric had mixed results, a finding that would not be possible if looking at either tactic in isolation. The work that happened in place-based rhetoric enabled parcels to be removed from the auction block both prior to and after the BLM sale. PeaceUp's actions also helped establish the precedent that any new parcels under consideration for development would be questioned (Maffly, 2014). Moreover, PeaceUp successfully demonstrated to the national climate movement that Utah could be an effective place for climate protest. DeChristopher's actions catalyzed new forms of climate action in Utah, which has continued to grow since this event, including a more diverse climate justice movement in Utah than was represented in the DeChristopher campaign.

At the same time though, DeChristopher was convicted and sent to prison and some of the parcels auctioned that day were leased for oil and gas exploration. Park-adjacent BLM lands and other monument lands remain under threat. President Trump's 2017 reduction of Bears Ears National Monument is a prime example. Additionally, in a move reminiscent of the Bush administration's playbook and following Trump's energy dominance platform (Schneider & Peeples, 2018), BLM announced its intent to "open up more than 114,000 acres of wild lands in Utah—including more than 86,000 acres in southeastern Utah—to oil and gas drilling as part of its upcoming September [2020] lease sale" (Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, 2020). Outside of Utah, drilling companies were asked in 2020 to identify parcels in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for which they would like to secure leases in a sale prior to the end of the Trump administration. Like many social movements, then, evaluating the "success" or "effectiveness" of PeaceUp's tactics is complicated.

Second, as we previewed in the essay, it is important to linger on a key consequence of PeaceUp's rhetoric. Despite being a self-described climate justice movement, PeaceUp's place-based and place-as rhetoric tactics emplace and embody rhetorics of Whiteness that are typical in mainstream environmental movements. While appeals to pristine land rely on settler entitlements that erase Indigenous sovereignty and relations with land, the primarily White embodied and emplaced protestors in the FSZ benefitted from their positionality in ways that we might not see if the majority of protestors seeking to get arrested were Black, Indigenous, or People of Color communities. We are not raising this point to condemn the PeaceUp activists, but rather to contribute to "explicitly naming and critiquing the rhetorical norms of Whiteness, racism, and colonialism in mainstream environmentalism and environmental discourse is one step toward better seeing how race and indigeneity matters to all environmental issues" (Endres, 2020, p. 325). As such, future research into the role of place in environmental activism should also consider the privileges inherent within certain meanings and constructions of place and the consequences for seeking just and equitable environmental and climate actions.

Notes

1. While we used participatory critical rhetoric in this analysis, rhetorical fieldwork is a broad category that characterizes a variety of approaches to combining rhetoric with qualitative methods. (Endres et al., 2016; Hauser, 2011; Hess, 2011; McKinnon et al., 2016; Pezzullo, 2007; Pezzullo & de Onís, 2018; Rai & Druschke, 2018)
2. Both authors attended PeaceUp protests. One of the authors attended one protest event. The other author attended five events. Texts produced from this fieldwork include: 16 videos totaling 1:15 h, 73 still images, 34 pages of fieldnotes totaling 19,500 words, 21 social media screengrabs, 17 songs that were released as an album (available on the PeaceUp website), 15.5 h of audio recording, and various physical items including songbooks, pamphlets, buttons, an orange sash and zip tie.
3. One of the authors was present in both places during fieldwork (dates: 2/18/11, 2/27/11, and 7/31/11).

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