The Role of 'New' Media in the Occupy Wall Street Movement

Crispus Attucks, the First Martyr of the American Revolution, King (now State) Street, Boston, March 5th, 1770. Page 16.
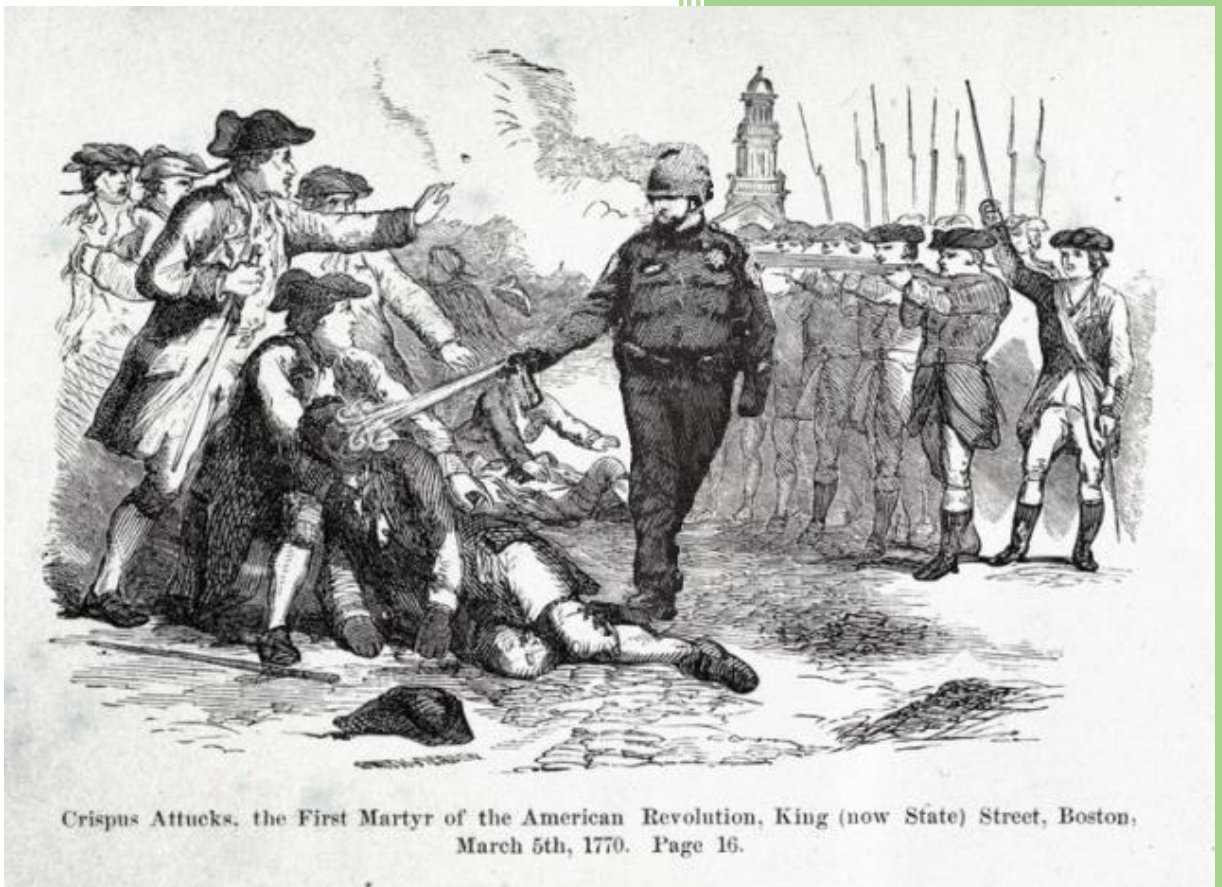
Djoeke Hannah Vielen
3513173
Utrecht University

Research Seminar III
Professors :Marion Fumerton and Ariel
Sanches-Meertens

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Introduction

November 18, University of California, Davis. Some days earlier students and some teachers set up tents to symbolise their alliance and support of Occupy Wall Street (OWS). Students are arm-locked with each other in a circle on the campus territory to protest against high fees and earlier police brutality. A cop steps over their circle and, at one-meter distance, directs pepper spray in the protesters' faces. Not a very smart move, considering that everyone on the site has a mobile phone with a camera. Of course, it doesn't take long before these videos appear on the internet. The incident is filmed from various angles and soon the cop's name and address are known to the public. Thanks to these 'new media', it seems that the public has acquired a new way of defence against corrupt authorities.

It is not the first time when 'new' media seem to promise a revolution. The German playwright Berthold Brecht heralded the coming of the radio, a type of media that was new in his days. Arguing in several essays that the radio was sure to bring *the* revolution, Brecht contended also that it would bring culture to those who could not afford it. In Brecht's view, the masses could learn what was happening in the world due to this 'communication' device (Brecht, Silberman 2001).

It has by now become clear, however, that the radio has not brought the revolution Brecht hoped for, which turned Brecht into a biggest cynics regarding the radio. What is important, however, is Brecht's theorizing of the radio as a medium that would allow masses to communicate with other masses, so that to fully accomplish its function (Brecht, Silberman 2001).This description seems to be awfully familiar with how the internet seems to operate. There is even a debate whether these new technologies have changed or influenced the mobilisation process or the collective action theory.

In 2011 a group of people decided to camp out in Zucoti park to protest against the excesses of Wall Street, calling themselves the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement. What attracted attention to the movement was their way of protesting, reminiscing of the Arab Spring were people camped on squares until their demands were met. The other remarkable thing about the OCW movement was, that it was an interesting case study to analyse the use of new media. Many incidents, like the pepper-spray cop, seem to lead back to 'new media'. I want to study the influence of new media in the OCW movement from it media appearance till it's disappearance. The problem is how to study or 'measure' the influence of new media in the movement.

The first thing to do is to use collective action theory to analyse the movement itself. The theory was further developed by Mancur Olson. (Olsen 1977) He tried to come up with a formula to measure the moment when people would undertake action for a collective cause and how people could organise themselves the most efficient way to reach that collective cause. Since the theory has

been expanded and build upon by other scholars. These expansions, like organisation theory, framing and opportunity structure will be used to understand the basics structure of the OCW movement. These theories allow me to ask standard questions, and the answers of those questions will help me to further analyse the use of new media itself.

The use of this collective action theory will be the buildings blocks of this article, because the theory in itself is insufficient to analyse new media itself. This will be done by looking at the affordance of a medium. Affordance was introduced by Donald Norman in 1998. It is a term that describes the fundamental properties of how an object is going to be used.(Schäfer 2011)
A chair for example is designed to sit on and is most of the time also used to sit on. In this extend we can analyse how the new media are used. Affordance is about asking the question how the basis structure of a medium works, and how the medium itself is used. What are new media then?

New media is an umbrella term that harbours elements who separate the media form the old and new. Media theorists have written volumes on what new media precisely are, trying to name elements that explain what is new media actually is. For my thesis it is enough to name three elements: the virtual, the digital, and the hyper-textual. These three elements have, in my opinion, most influenced the aspects of the mobilisation process and collective action theory. The hyper-textual can be linked to the organisational structure of the OCW movement. The hypertextual is an element of new media that explains how the internet is organised and will thus have the most influence on the organisation of the OCW movement itself. This will be discussed in the first chapter. The second chapter handles the digital aspect of new media and their influence on framing and opportunity structures. The digital aspect of new media is the key-element that allows information to be shared through a network. This certainly opens up more opportunities, but the way it is framed makes it seem that it can cause revolutions. This topic will be further explored by examining what the opportunities the movement had in order to organise and how the digital aspect helped them. The third chapter will link the virtual aspect to the consequences of framing with two examples to explain these consequences. The virtual element of new media is controversial because it suggest a different space for users to explore. This is why I want to connect this aspect with framing to demonstrate the consequences of what can happen if a frame is accepted.

I have used a lot of terms that can be unfamiliar to a reader not fully introduced in this field. These terms however will be further explained in their connected chapters. In the final chapter, a theoretical debate between two media academics will be introduced to clarify the role the three aspects of the new media played during the OCW movement.

1. The Hyper-Textual and the Organisational Structure

On July 9, 2011 Adbusters sends out this tweet: #acampadaWallstreet: Can we get 20,000 people to flood Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, a democratic assembly and occupy Wall Street? (Adbusters 2011). Adbusters is a global organisation founded in 1989 to "combat the erosion of our physical and cultural environment". The tweet gets responses, and Adbusters posts a text on their website on July 13, 2011 explaining their intentions with the tweet.

On September 17, we want to see 20,000 people flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street for a few months. Once there, we shall incessantly repeat one simple demand in a plurality of voices (Culture Jammer HQ 2011).

Two things come to mind when viewing this tweet. The first is that, to me at least, it seems incredibly risky to name an exact number when there is no way to tell how many people will exactly come. This number certainly was not met in the first phases of the OCW movement, but, considering that the OCW movement sprang up in different kinds of places around the world, it is safe to say the number of 20,000 followers was surpassed. Secondly, although there are some ideas on what the general goal of the OCW movement is, the exact aims remain unclear, vague, or constantly updated. The one and simple demand was not shouted on September 17. Instead, a lot of demands were shouted, all at once and all together. There are underlying causes and connections that created these situations, and they can be explained by discussing the hyper-textual aspect of new media and their influence on the OCW movement.

The organisational structure of the OCW movement

Olson's main's concern on the organization of collective action was eliminating the 'free-rider' problem. He theorized that when an organization booked some results, more people would join the organization reaping the benefits without actually contributing to the organization. Olson theorized that the solution lies in the way movements organize themselves. (Meyer 2004)

The OCW movement however seems not to be concerned with this problem.

The first step for the campaign was to gather as much people as possible. On August 2, a general assembly was held to make plans. David Graeber an academic and anarchist said the assembly became a familiar American protest where other people told other people what to do. There were around 120 people there, he tapped a couple people on the shoulder and gathered around 50 to 60 people to organize his own assembly. This time the structure was to be horizontal, everyone could speak his or her mind on what they wanted to accomplish. With hand signs and signals they could communicate their opinions with the rest of the organization. He held assemblies and came up with a slogan. On September 17 the official twitter account of the OCW movement

mentioned his name and after that he claims he became the official communication channel. (Chafkin 2012)

This is one way to minimalize the free-rider problem, namely by making everyone responsible for the success of the organization. If you want to partake in the organization you have to search for the people who organize these events. If you can't find them you can organize them yourself and hope that enough people will join you. The camps were a breeding ground for new initiatives and enough people were around to partake in these initiatives.(Egberts 2012) This type of organizational structure makes it easier for organizations and movements to go viral. People could take the initiative themselves and start their own OWS movement in their own city without restriction of the "leaders" of the movement. Bimber theorized that new media could problematize participation in new social movements. (Bimber, Flanagin & Stohl 2005)

You can share video's or click a like-button with information on the movement, but are you then really participating? This is then the greatest weakness of this type of organization. Spectators can make decisions for the movement without having participated in the movement. Being a participant requires more than taking part in the movement, most likely you have to organize something yourself. However if you organize something you might become a leader, which in turn can create an hierarchical structure. (Katz 2011)

Which kind of defeats the purpose of horizontal structure.

There are striking similarities with the way new media are organized. Inherently new media is supposed to be organized in a horizontal way. There are however leaders in the new media because they have many visitors, viewers and followers. Still everyone can make use of new media, but there is a difference with consuming new media and doing something with new media. How does the organizational structure of new media influence the OWS movement?

The distributed network and the organizational structure of the Occupy Wall Street movement

After Zucoti Park, the OCW movement spread to other cities, countries, and continents. The movement was going 'viral'. This term can be explained by explaining how the hyper-textual allows

CENTRALIZED (A)   DECENTRALIZED (B)   DISTRIBUTED (C)
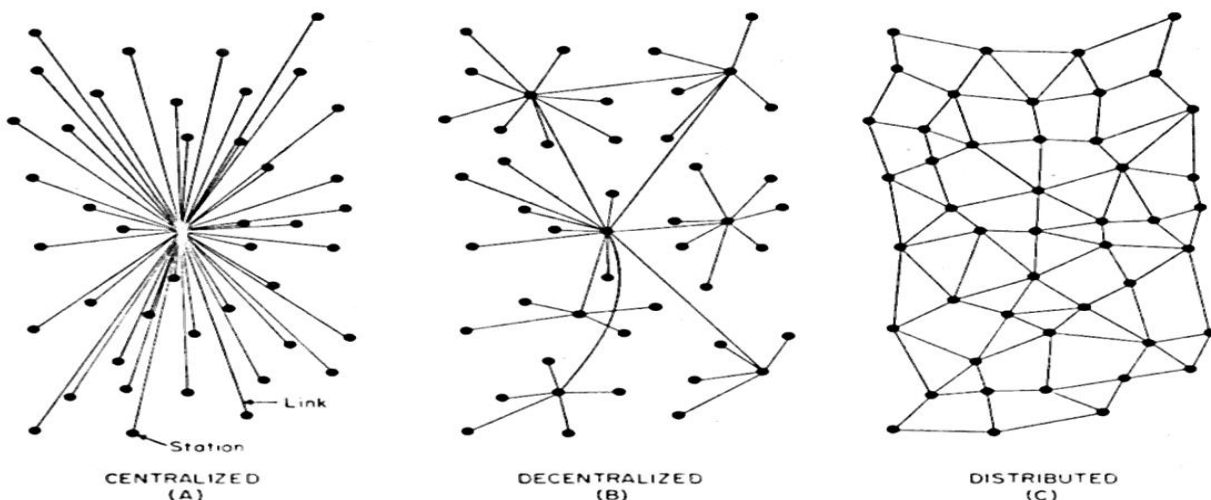
for the existence of a certain kind of network. If, for example, you have content and you share it with three people, potentially, these three people can share this content as well; however, not all three are likely to share the content. If you follow the lines of this content, then the kind of network you will get is a decentralised network (see Graph B). This can be compared to how a virus is distributed. While digital content is shared voluntarily, a virus is not. Hence the phrase; going viral. The network itself, or the internet, is however a distributed network. The distributed network is a cold-war remnant (see Graph C for the illustration).

Imagine that the dots in Graphs A-C are military stations. If one of these stations gets attacked, the other military station needs to know it as fast as possible to organise their own defence or to come to aid. Communication between the stations is thus of a great importance, but how can this be best achieved? When looking at the first illustration (see Graph A), it can be easily be spotted that this is the weakest defence system. One only needs to destroy the centre station to paralyse all other stations. The second illustration (see Graph B) is presumably stronger then the first one, but, still, the communication can be closed with a couple of more precise attacks. In the last illustration (see Graph C), every station is connected with the next station. Making each station as strong as the remaining others allows for swift reaction and the possibility to close down eventual weak spots when attacked (Baran 1964).

If I compare the network between various OCW camps, I say that it closely resembles the second illustration (Graph B), or a structure half-way between a centralized and a decentralized network, because the first camp of OCW in the Zuccoti park was a tad more important than all other camps. So, a coordinated strategy attack on the camps should be enough to 'defeat' the OCW movement—which is exactly what happened. Juris and Egberts, a professor and a student who, as mentioned above, partook in different camps both suggested a coordinated strategy to remove the camps, and this strategy was later confirmed by several news articles (Juris 2012, Egberts 2012, Kilkenny 2012, N.A. 2011)[1]. Juris even talks about how the OCW movement was planning to have a more distributed network days before the feared eviction. It is hard to have a physical distributed network. Juris recognised that the camps impose heavy constraints on the morale and the energy of the OCW movement, especially with winter setting in (Juris 2012). By contrast, digital content is easier to transport and to keep in one place.

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[1] It should be noted that most of these sources are showing a certain bias. I consider the article in *The Guardian* as the most 'neutral' source.
Regardless of these biases, the way they present their cases certainly show that there was a coordinated 'attack' on the OCW movement.

The hyper-textual and the extension dilemma

Every time when a link, a message or other forms of content are presented to the user, he or she can decide what to do with it. Whether the resulting action is legal or smart is a secondary question. The fact remains that when you put content on the network, you automatically lose control over the said content. So, when the 'call for action' went on the internet, it was unpredictable how many people would react. Studying the question whether new communication technologies change the mobilisation process, Bimber notices that, even though more people could be made aware of upcoming protests, how they actually participate is up to them (Bimber, Flanagin & Stohl 2005). Are you participating in a collective action if you click 'like'? Or do you have to participate in the street through your physical presence there?

The park did not receive 20,000 protesters on its first day, but the protest however went 'viral'; thus, it can be argued that the OCW movement had far more supporters than the initial 20,000 Adbusters had hoped for, even if the people who 'protested at home' are not taken into account. This support for OCW is, on the one hand, positive because it shows that there are issues under a large part of the population. On the other hand, with that many people and no clear organisation, it loses focus. The group that got pepper spayed at their university, for example, put up tents to manifest their support of the OCW movement; however, long before the OCW movement, they had also organised an Occupy movement of their own with their own personal goals.[2] So, although the camps were affiliated with the one in Zucoti park, they all had their own personal goals. Furthermore, there was also the problem of free-loaders. People showed up on other camps with no other goals than a place to sleep or a free bite (Juris 2012, Egberts 2012). Different sites popped up about the OCW movement. Even though Adbusters were among the starters of the OCW movement, it is not clear how much they are still involved with the OCW movement or whether they will start organising protests under their own name again. When typing in occupywallstreet.org, you get redirected to the Adbusters site itself. Instead of one demand shouted in unison, several demands were shouted all at once, making thus the actual goal of OCW unclear.

Mancur Olson's theory of collective action posits that is is best carried out in small groups. In 2003, Lupia and Sin, two political scientists, argued that, due to new technology, this theory grew invalid. I disagree and think Olson's theory still holds up. That new media can reach more people does not necessarily mean that the addressed people will join or provide the necessary level of participation. The other factor is what James Jasper called 'the extension dilemma'. According this notion, the more people will join, the less coherent the resulting message will be. That was exactly
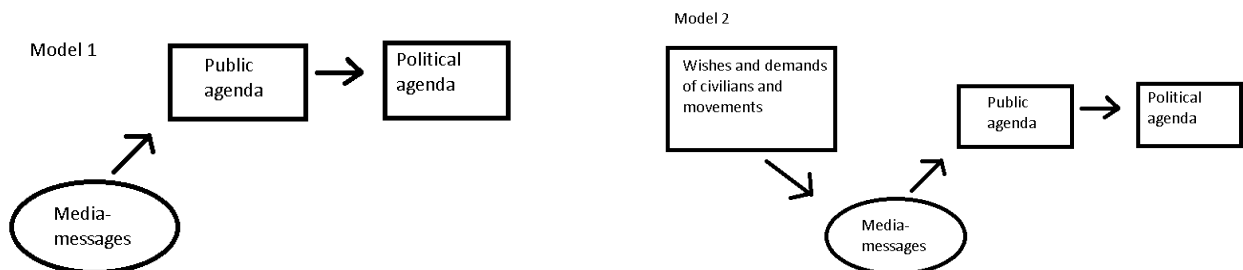
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[2] As is shown in this magazine protesters published:
http://www.indybay.org/uploads/2010/02/19/afterthefall_communiques.pdf

the case with the OCW movement where the only thing that was clear was their slogan: *We are the 99 percent*

**Traditional media *versus* new media**

From his observations, Egberts concludes that once the camps of the OCW movement disappeared, the movement disappeared from the news broadcasts as well. Why were these established news sources necessary for the OCW movement?

Commissioned by the scientific research and documentation department of the Ministry of Safety and Justice in the Netherlands, B. van Gestel researched the influence of the media on the political agenda of criminal investigation. It should be noted that with 'media' Gestel solely means the journalistic kind of media. In Gestel's view, television, newspaper, or radiobroadcast news are part of the media. He conceptualizes four models of 'influence' on the public or political agenda.

Model 1

Public agenda → Political agenda

Media-messages

Model 2

Wishes and demands of civilians and movements

Public agenda → Political agenda

Media-messages

The public agenda are the concerns of the public which often influence the political agenda. The political agenda has the power to impose rules and regulations to address those concerns, or as they see fit. In model one, it is the media that shape the public agenda by reporting certain events. Model two has the demands of citizen's and movements influencing the media who then influence the public agenda and, finally, the political agenda.

In model three it is when the political agenda influences media reports that, in their turn, influence public agenda. The difference with the first model is that, in the model one, it is assumed that the media investigate events on their own, in the third model, politics search to legitimise their policies through the media. Model one can also be hazardous, as the market can sensationalize news stories or intentionally frame them in the wrong way. Only model four leaves the media out of the

Model 3

Public agenda

Political agenda

Media-messages

Model 4

Crime analyses → Political agenda
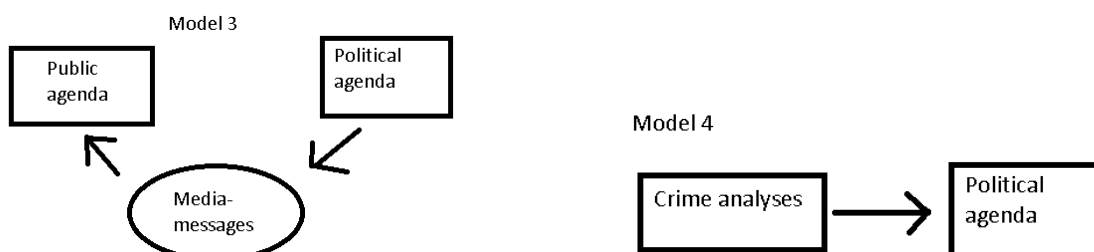
process of agenda forming, because, in this model, the political agenda is based on the analytical review of events (Gestel 2002). It becomes clear why activists search for alternative news sources to bypass traditional media. This said, there is however a reason why traditional media are involved in three of the four models.

The reason why traditional journalism or media are still necessary is because, unlike new media, traditional media are centralised. While a distributed network is the strongest defence system, a centralised network is the strongest form of information distribution. New media have the chance to reach a wider audience compared to traditional media, they however need more time to do so. This is so because new media depend on their audiences to further distribute content or information. The organisation of the OCW movement went hardly noticed because the organisation took place on a distributed network. So the information largely stayed in its own circle.

When the OCW movement 'took' Zucoti park, they were somewhat surprised. Perhaps, this partially explains why it took quite a while for the news to pick up the story about the OCW movement. When the news did so, it certainly helped the movement regardless of in which light they portrayed the OCW movement. More people became aware of the movement and could go online to find out more about what was happening. Traditional media can still make you aware of items you yourself would not bother looking up online. This can have both positive and negative consequences, which can be explained by comparing the two novels: *1984* by George Orwell and *A brave new world* by Aldus Huxley. In Orwell's novel, a dystopian world is where someone else decided what you see. In Huxley's vision, it's were you never leave your own comfort zone. Centralised media are needed to reach the people who do not think or live the same way you do. That is why even politicians depend on the centralised media to legitimise their policies.
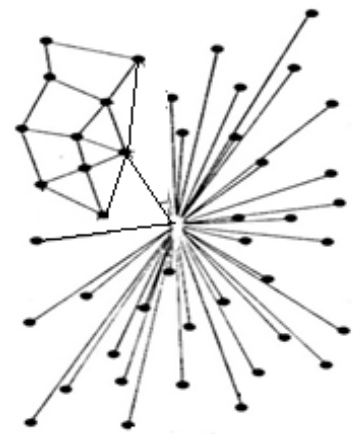
Summary

This chapter focused on how the 'new' media influenced the OCW organisational structure. The first paragraph showed that the OCW movement is organised in a horizontal way. This way of organising is certainly the most certainly the most flexible one, but as the rest of the chapter showed it still has its problems. The free-rider problem for example still remained and goals and cohesive statements are harder to reach. I would say that this way the organization was not completely organized in a horizontal way, but rather given away to the internet. The second paragraph namely illustrated why one can lose control over the content when putting it on the internet. In the third paragraph, this was applied to the OCW movement losing control over its goals and messages. Organising online can

also have it advantages; the internet is a perfect distributed network, and the online organisations are, therefore, hard to eradicate. At the same time, organisations should organise themselves in physical circumstances, as well reach out to centralised media. This way, the OCW movement was able reach out to an audience that otherwise would not know of the movement's existence. In order to influence the political agenda, the OCW movement needs to convince that audience. As I have stated, it was not necessary for the centralised media to portray the OCW in a positive light. Definitely, this will help the movement more, but when people start looking them up online, it offers the movement a chance to speak in a more direct manner to that audience.

The camps for the OCW movement became very important to stay in the centralised media's spotlight, and perhaps more importantly, influence how they were perceived by the public. The loss of these camps also meant the loss of the OCW movement. The OCW movement still exists, because, as stated earlier, it is hard to eradicate something completely of a distributed network. If they make a comeback, it should however be under a different name and a different tactic. All tough digital content, though hidden, can nevertheless be found. While the OCW movement is now largely digital content, their adversaries can track everything OCW-related online.

2. Digital influence on framing strategies and opportunities of the Occupy Wall Street movement.

The image of the cop who used pepper-spray against students went viral. This means that a lot of people got videos or pictures of this event and chose to circulate them among their contacts. Alternatively, the content could have got selected for them based on these users' history and preferences. Another thing about content going viral is that it does not mean that people only see the original content. As mentioned in the previous chapter, you can potentially do anything you want with the content you come across in the internet. So when people behind their screens stumbled upon the image of the pepper spray cop, they copied and edited that image into other images.

The cop wasn't using spray against students anymore. He was now spraying in the "The Scream" painted by Edward Munich. Instead of God touching the hand of Adam, he gets sprayed. Even the Declaration of Independence gets casually sprayed by John Pike, as his original name suggests. This digitally stored information was grabbed by hackers and put on the internet (Car Scott 2013). In this single event we can analyse two themes of collective action theory. Namely opportunity structure and framing theory.

The opportunities of the Occupy Wall Street movement

An aspect of collective action theory is if collective action is even possible in certain circumstances. This is why academics are looking at opportunity structure. One of the first people to look at opportunity structure is Eisingers . He wondered why in the seventies riots took place in certain cities and other cities did not face riots. His hypothesis was that in the cities were riots took place had a more closed structure and thus less chance for its citizens to express their grievances. Charles Tilly was said to build further upon Eisingers work. He further researched the chances people got and had from authorities to influence policy and were they would be cut off from those chances. (Meyer 2004)

So the first question is what were the opportunities for the OCW movement? The first opportunity is the constitution of the U.S. that states that people have freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom to petition. This opportunity however is not that big of a deal. Through court orders, and a slow justice system, the chances of changing a system by exercising this right, is very small, but crucial nonetheless. (Ax 2013, Ross et al. 2011)

  The biggest potential opportunity the OCW movement has are their resources. Namely their hand-held devices that can record everything and us it against adversaries of the movement.

There is an idea that citizens can call out officials and governments on wrongful statements, as we have seen in the pepper-spray cop incident where uploaded YouTube films spoke against the

official statement. There seems to be a reverse Foucauldian panopticon. Instead of the citizens that have to be careful if they are being watched, it is the officials themselves that are being watched (Garret 2006). New media can record, and copy various incidents and then upload them on the spot, to the internet. This sending on the spot can feel more 'real', because the content is taken directly from the event and then sent to content-sharing sites like YouTube, Facebook, or Flickr. This element is often exploited by the movie industry. *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) introduced the 'found footage' genre. Cameras with footage still on them were found and then directed to the public where the public was learning about a group of campers exploring the myth about a witch living in the woods.

Another film in this genre is the film *Project X* (2012). This movie is about a party invitation for a film going viral. All the footage of cameras and news broadcasts are put together and then released as a film. The films in this genre are always entirely scripted. Because the camera that films the event is not stable, the audience is more aware of the fact that someone is holding the camera. It gives the feeling that there is a person holding the camera and, thus, emphasises that a 'real' event is underway. Steven Spielberg was the first to use this effect in his film *Saving Private Ryan* (1998).

Digital content can however be also edited on the spot, influencing the credibility of digital content and complicating the ´truth´. I can illustrate this by providing two examples where the digital factor played a key role in the OCW movement.

The pepper-spray cop case *versus* the epileptic girl case

The pepper-spray cop definitely attracted more attention to the OCW movement. The student who did fieldwork during the OCW movement describes an event were a girl went into seizure during her arrest, and the cops did nothing to help her. He questions why this event did not go viral, comparing it with the events of 24 September when the brutality of the police brutality did went 'viral', or at least these events were widely reported in the news.

I am going to compare these two incidents, the one with the cop who sprayed the students and the other with the girl who went into seizure during her arrest on March 17, 2012. They are both examples of police brutality, but their circumstances were completely different leading one event to go 'viral', and the other to remain largely unknown. The first thing I can say about these two events is that, although digital content can be spread around very easily, it does not necessarily entail that it will.

So why did the pepper-spray cop, also known as the 'casually pepper-spray everything cop' (Car Scott 2013), go viral? The first thing about him is that there was a clear picture of him as a really bad guy. The person seemed to also be quite ridiculous. Quite funny, too, which perhaps convinced people to Photoshop the image into various other pictures to be made fun of again (Judkis 2011).

When journalists asked questions about the event, it was stated that the police felt threatened and had to take drastic measures. Several onlookers recorded the event from different angles, showing that one could easily walk past them, which clearly showed that the protesters did not threat anyone at all. (Memmott 2011). The digital aspect has made it possible to call officials out on lies and deceit. So why isn't there as much outrage about the episode with the epileptic girl?

On March 17, 2012, a girl who was being arrested started getting seizures. The police left her on the ground, supposedly doing nothing to help her. Egberts suggests that the important reason for this content not to go viral is that the OCW movement was not relevant anymore (Egberts 2012). By this time, the camps were gone, and new attempts to occupy places were stopped right at the start. While this may be true, other factors also played a role.

As with most of the content uploaded by the OCW movement, the filmed event with the girl who went into seizures was not of a great quality. The camera is not stable and, overall, one has to be told what is going on. The shaky-cam effect may have value in Hollywood, but events have to be shot in a way that the viewer can see what is going on. If this is not the case, both sides can have alternative stories about the events, and each of them would be telling the 'truth'. The side with the best way of framing their truth wins.

Framing in the Occupy Wall Street movement.
The word framing has come up in this article, but it's meaning has not been fully explained. Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman explain framing as followed:

"The major premise of framing theory is that an issue can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and be construed as having implications for multiple values or considerations. Framing refers to the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue." (Chong, Druckman 2007)

When someone thinks, for example, that freedom of speech is important regardless of what is being said, it can dominate this person's other values like, public safety and hygiene. Politicians and movements try to form their message in a way that it will be dominate on a key-values their followers might have. (Chong, Druckman 2007)
 This we can see back in the slogan of the OCW movement, allegedly devised by David Graeber; *We are the 99 percent*."

What this slogan implies is that the people, in the first instance the American people, were not represented by the people in power. They placed stories of people in financial trouble, with causes beyond their own control, and who did not receive any help from authorities. (Bennet, Segerberg 2013)

It described the one percent as the real problem of the deteriorating economy. So natural it was not cool to be part of the one percent and forced a lot of people, including the president of the United States to state their alliance with the movement. (Memoli 2011)

Although their slogan was strong, their way of protesting still evoked negative responses of people who thought them of a public nuisance, and thought that they already made their point. (N.A. 2012)

Adversaries of the movement, namely the authorities the OCW movement was protesting against, directed their attention to the value of safety and public hygiene. Stating that the camps were a danger to these values and thus had the right to remove the camps. (Ross et al. 2011) While still supposedly agreeing with the OCW movement that centred their frame around the value of freedom of speech. The OCW movement in response to this frame claimed that their freedom of speech was repressed. The problem was that there was a need for evidence for this repression. As we have seen when discussing opportunities this evidence was harder to come by than initially thought. The next example shows further problematization of proving repression by authorities.

The difference between twenty minutes and two months

When digital content is uploaded, there is always a frame to accompany that content. 'Viral' content of the OWS movement was consciously placed on sites to spread around as much as possible; in doing so, there was also a hope to gain more followers and support. Two researchers analysed digital content in order to find out what kind of content gained most followers for the OCW movement. A picture that attracted most followers was the image of two screenshots placed together with a large

pink text across the image (Gaby 2012). The first screenshot highlights the beginning of a *New York Times* online news article where it is stated that the New York police deliberately let demonstrators walk on the bridge, only to cut them off and arrest them. The other article makes it seem that the action from the demonstrators was illegal in the first place.

The image makes it seem that the *New York Times* is influenced by the police, or that the newspaper has an unfair bias against the movement. Kevin M Lerner, a doctoral candidate in journalism and media at the Rutger University in New Jersey suggests, however, that there might be going on less than the image initiates. When inspecting the image closer, one sees that there are 58 minutes in-between the two updates, a minor point, but still important to be highlighted as an example of there being a story behind the compilation of the image. Kevin M Lerner points out that the second sentence does not blame anyone, the accusation is just removed from the first article. Secondly, another reporter joined to edit the article. Lerner suggests that this reporter might have come back from the scene with a different story (Lerner 2011a).

About two months later, Kevin M Lerner was in contact with one of the journalists in the follow-up blog where he tried to find out more about the events of that day. There were about five reporters on the scene, which is many, but too few if one looks for detailed and objective accounts of the events. The complete article does not seem to side with the demonstrators or the police but suggests rather that there simply were communication errors between the two sides (Lerner 2011b). To read 225 words is harder than just look at an image.

Lerner does not want to rule out the bias completely, but he does note that, if there had been foul play, the story would have definitely leaked. He uses the picture as an example of what happens when it is more important to be the first with the story rather than reporting the story properly. To investigate what really happens with this kind of incidents, interviews have to be taken with multiple witnesses whose accounts can biased but also vague. A neutral version of events is a very hard thing to achieve. Furthermore, there is also the factor that these investigations take time, and by the time these investigations are completed, the event or incidents does not seem to be relevant anymore.

Summary

In this chapter, I wanted to address the gap between what people think new media can do and what media actually do. What people perceive as opportunities, but what are actually perceived values. New media are framed as devices that can bring justice and radical democracy. When looking at the real opportunities new media can bring, it turns out not to be of great significance.

First of all citizens who have access to digital tools have more opportunities than those who do not. As it turns out there is something called the digital gap. People of low income, even in the west seem to have less access to these digital tools. (Lister et al. 2009)

However, even when there is access to digital tools, there is still a quality gap between ordinary citizens and authorities. States and governments often have more access to television studios simultaneously watched by many people, an ordinary citizen often has only a smartphone with a camera. While it is clear that these cameras are constantly improving, the overall quality leaves much to be desired as most users won't have a steady grip.

Framing theory and opportunity structure are closely linked in this regard. Framing can be seen as an opportunity as well in my opinion, although there are complicated matters involved in this opportunity case. As we have seen with the various examples in this chapter, new media seem to further complicate matters because the involved parties can upload whatever they want the world to see and know on the internet, and to do so in their own frame expressing their own values in the uploaded content. Although this is possible, it does not guarantee that other involved parties or viewers just accept that frame. When coming across upon social injustice, it is not enough to just capture it. It should be captured in a specific way, so that the material speaks for itself. However, it does not mean that people will view it as you would view it. In the next chapter, I will explain that although frames do not necessarily get accepted, when they do, the consequences can reach quite far.

3. The consequences of framing the new media

The OCW movement was mostly organised 'online' via a distributed network. This was the reason why they mostly could 'meet' without being seen by eventual adversaries. Arrangements to eventually meet were made via forums and chats. When this kind of organisation is described, it often looks as if they 'met' each other online. More precisely however, what is meant with this is that they seemingly met each other in the virtual world to plan action in the physical world, supposedly without being seen. The virtual is an element of new media, that can be linked more clearly than the digital to framing theory, because the virtual aspect is in itself a frame as well. It is linked to the value of communication, namely that new media improves communication between people. In this chapter, the consequences of this kind of framing of new media will be addressed.

How framing affects research

As highlighted in the introduction, media academics agree that new media have a couple of defining elements. In this thesis, only three came up one of which remains quite controversial. Yet I introduce the term here because it shows the consequences of framing.

In the 90s of the 20th century politicians and business entrepreneurs were trying to describe this new thing that soon became mainstream, namely, the internet. Most popular metaphors for the internet were 'internet highway' and 'cyberspace'. 'Internet highway' is a term that was used by the Clinton administration and Bill Gates. It received a lot of criticism because it suggests a hierarchical one-way structure and a limited capacity. The term 'cyberspace' was coined by a science-fiction writer William Gibson. In contrast to 'internet highway', this term proved more powerful, because it suggested a space were new utopias could be created. (Schäfer 2011)

It is here that the virtual aspect derives from. Although the term is accepted by many academics (Lister et al. 2009, Miller 2011), this aspect was still criticized because it suggests that the internet actually is a separate room to meet other people. Don Slater, an academic who researches the sociology in new media, compares it with the first days of the telephone, when people still had a sense of meeting each other through using the telephone. Now the telephone is only seen as a device to contact someone, rather than to meet him or her (Slater 2004). In essence, this is what happens when you are browsing, or surfing, the internet. On the telephone, you communicate with your voice and ears. On the internet, you can communicate with images, sounds and texts, and even with all of these at once. Meeting 'face to face' is becoming an increasingly difficult term in my opinion, since it is actually possible to meet face to face online with a webcam.

In this new communication model, it seems like new cultures came into existence. Social studies began to investigate these internet cultures that apparently existed on the net only. Slater

argues that these cultures already existed, and that many forums and specific websites made them visible (Slater 2004). Different kinds of people grew aware that there were people 'like them' in other parts of the country or the world because they came into contact with them or saw them online.

When browsing online, you are more likely to find like-minded people. You visit the same sites, talk about the same things, and thus begin to notice that, although perhaps you will not have people like you in your surroundings, you know that they exist in the world because you see more people like you online. In the interviews with the OWS participants, it became clear that they were there not only to protest, but also to actually meet like-minded people, people with the same ideas and lifestyles. The actual protester of the movement became concerned with this fact and began to wonder if the camps should be closed so that the actual purpose of the OCW movement would be addressed again. (Egberts 2012, Bennet, Segerberg 2013).

The consequence of framing on our actions

The OCW movement was inspired by the Arab spring, particularly, by occupying of the Tahir square in Egypt (Juris 2012, Egberts 2012, Kerton 2012). Why did the OCW movement think they could achieve something similar to what demonstrators did in Egypt? When watching the reports surrounding the Arab Spring, one would think it was the 'new' media that caused these revolutions instead of dictatorships, suppression, or low food prices (Wolman 2013).Sometimes there were critical notes of the use of new media during the Arab Spring, but most of the time this was about the dangers of the use of new media. It spoke about martyrdom and sacrifices because of the use of new media (Khamis 2013, Burns, Eltham 2009)The glaring missing question in these reports is the following: how many people actually had access to new media?

The way new media were framed in the reporting of the Arab Spring had a backlash. Because if new media help spark revolutions in the East, why not in the West? If the people could organise on the square and stay there until their demands were met, why not also in the United States? The Arab spring made it seem like new media could spark revolution and overthrow governments. This sentiment was of course promoted in the semantics and business models (Vries De 2012).

Summary

In this chapter, I addressed the issue of the consequences of framing regarding the ways we act and think about certain subjects. It is not clear how academic research would look like if we did address the internet as an information highway. However, the relationship between the word 'cyberspace', the virtual, and internet cultures is clear enough to draw conclusions. Although the Arab Spring inspired the OCW movement to undertake collective action, the camps became more of a meeting

place and showcases of an alternative lifestyle. It is not enough to only 'meet' like-minded people online.

With three elements of the new media, I wanted to analyse what role new media played in the OCW movement and, perhaps, in the mobilisation process. The hyper-textual has an influence on the way organisation happens online. Because people choose what to do with content, they come across the net, and their actual participation in collective action is becoming unclear and more loosely based. People can choose to alter digital content and frame it the way they like. This, in turn, does not guarantee that other people will actually believe in that frame. However, people who have same interests and political views will believe in this frame faster, as compared to people outside of your circle. With the virtual element, we see that people use the internet as a means to 'meet' like-minded people. It seems that new media make everything more individualistic.

This individualistic trend was noticed by Lance W. Bennet, academic in the political science, who observed that social movements are using the personal approach as to frame their collective action. The *We are the 99 percent* frame is an example of such a frame. New media makes it possible for people to write their stories with their miseries and make them a part of something bigger (Bennet 2013) A personal example is when I was asked to share my story in how budget cuts for higher education would affect me. Other examples are when politicians or agencies make a website to collect stories about a political issue. By telling your own story, you suddenly belong to a greater group that shares the same problems and thus stands stronger together. Telling your personal story suddenly becomes an act of collective action.

4. Agency and the media in collective action theory

So far I have answered how certain aspects of new media have influenced the OCW movement. This research fits in to a bigger theoretical debate. Where does human agency stop and technological agency come in to play? Agency is an aspect of collective action theory that is difficult to research. How many of the decisions in collective action are rational? How much do the people in the movements have to say about their choices? The difficult part of agency is that it is a factor that is hard to incorporate into academic descriptions and that is not to be captured in formulas or schematics. Agency is a difficult subject to measure. James Jasper tried instead to summarize a couple of decisions that groups have to make at a certain point.

The OCW movement and agency

The extension dilemma was outlined in the first chapter. A group has to decide to stay small and thus have more control over its actions. Or reach out and thus have more credibility and support for their actions.(Jasper 2004) As shown in the first chapter, basically any time you want to mobilise people through the internet, you no longer have any control over the amount of people you will mobilise, unless these people are part of a union or company (Laer 2010). The OCW movement was a loose movement with a lot of different groups under its collective name.

When releasing content on the internet, people who come across that content can potentially do what they want with it. I emphasise the potential here, because most of the time people are limited by law and by plain decency. This falls under the 'naughty or nice' decision. At what point does a group consciously break the law to gain its goals? How much truth or lie does a group use to help it in their cause? (Jasper 2004). With the OCW movement, it is hard to say if they could make this decision consciously. Because the OCW movement was not a coherent group, it entailed that anyone with digital equipment could make this decision on his or her own. Conveying cops' personal information is an example of this. This was done by people who claimed to be part of a group called Anonymous.

Then, in the third chapter, we saw how much a framing can affect actions. As said before, there is a gap between what technology does and what people think it can do. The first three chapters show that new media certainly have influence on the mobilisation process, but how much agency does a group have if its choices are limited by framing? Or if this choice is made by the technology they choose to use?

Human circumstances and versus technological circumstances

In media studies, this debate is always introduced as a kind of measurement of how deeply technology influences us and to what extent we are in control over this technology. At one pole of the spectrum, we have Marshall McLuhan who says that technology not only influences us, but even controls us. In McLuhan's view, technology is an extension of man. This notion was not new around his time. In fact, already Aristotle wrote about tools as an extension of the body and soul firmly giving humans control over these tools. During the Industrial Revolution, there were thinkers like, for example, Marx who saw it the other way around. This time these were not tools, but machines that seemed to control our daily lives (Lister et al. 2009).

McLuhan's greatest, Robert Williams, accused McLuhan's of technological determinism. Technological determinism is the contention that technology has been the driving force behind historical changes. This is shown in McLuhan's favourite example of how technology controls us. Namely, he discussed the example of how electric light changed everything. With the invention of the electric light, the sunlight no longer controlled our daily rhythms. The electric light allows us, or, perhaps, even forces us to work well past the sunset. Hence, one of his most controversial statements was that 'the medium is the message', that is, content does not matter. This is why he uses the electric light or a light bulb as an example, as they pre-eminently do not have content (Lister et al. 2009).

To counter the light bulb example, Williams came with a medium that is all about content: the written word. The written word has been around in different forms since ancient times. According to McLuhan rhetoric, the printing press which cancels out time and space needed for the written word should be able to bring the written word to more and more people. However, even when the printing press came around at its height, only about forty percent of the population were literate. Technology can only succeed if economic, cultural, and political circumstances allow for it (Lister et al. 2009). He concludes that, ultimately, technology is an extension of men, and we are thus in control of technology.

Obviously, the right answer to this debate lies somewhere in the middle. We have control over technology and, thus, influence it. It would however be quite naïve to reject the idea that media influence us too. By analysing the OCW movement from a McLuhanian perspective, I felt that we could get more insight into the role that new media were or are playing in the OCW movement. Of course, William's point of view should also provide more insight into the OCW movement. The same questions that were forgotten with the Arab Spring like 'How many people have access to new media?' could also be applied to the OCW movement.

Sasha Constanza-Chock researched how many people of the OCW movement actively used new media to protest. As it turned out, only a small percentage posted content online. The OCW

participants mostly donated money, marched in protests, or signed petitions. There was a core group of media experts who knew how to broadcast and use these new communication technologies(Costanza-Chock 2012).

Despite the small percentage of active new media users, it still had a profound influence on the way the OCW movement was organised, framed, and perceived. The active users attracted participants who found out about the movement online or via centralised broadcast media. These new participants might not be solely protesters, but also people who were in search of like-minded people, alternative lifestyles, and new ideas. Then, there were the causes of the OCW movement. The goals of the OCW movement might not be clear-cut, but they certainly were referring to unfair economic circumstances and social injustice. So while cultural, economic, and political circumstances had a huge influence on the OCW movement, the influence of new media could be just seen as significant.

Conclusion

What was the role of 'new' media during the OCW movement from its media appearance till its media disappearance? Three elements of new media could be linked to aspects of collective action theory. In this way, the 'role' of new media in the mobilisation process becomes clearer.

The first element is that of the hyper-textual. In technological terms, it means that someone can choose how to navigate or act. People behind computer screens can, in their hyper-textual environment, choose what to do with content. On a distributed network there is a potential to reach a wider audience. Because of the hyper-textual, this is not a certain factor. You can attract too few or too many people. There remains a question if the OCW movement had too many people. The fact was that there was no control or coherent goals for the OCW movement because too many 'groups' allied themselves with the movement.

There were hints that more opportunities opened up for normal citizens, because of the digital aspect of new media. Comparing two examples during the OCW movement, it was clear that better equipment was preferred, and well as a lot of well-equipped witnesses, and, as a final touch, a clear story captured in this digital content. Then, there is the explanation of chapter one where it was stated that social movements still needed centralised media to broadcast their stories. These centralised media like radio or television are still more accessible to established parties. Additionally, a final argument against the statement that new media has opened up new opportunities is that these established parties also have access to new media.

The digital aspect may not open up that many more opportunities, it does affect the way we undertake collective action. With the digital aspect framing strategies become more personal. Social movements tend to frame themselves more as a lot of individuals standing together. The digital element allows an individual to tell his or her story to a potential amount of people, but, as we have seen with the hyper-textual, it is up to those many people if they accept your story or share it.

As the third aspect of the new media, I presented the virtual element. This element served more as an example of the influence of framing on our actions and thoughts. If we see the first and second element then there is a lot of talk of potential possibilities. These possibilities are either nonexistence as a result of intentional framing or aren't taken. The cultural, economic, and political circumstances largely decide these factors. If we look at the debate between McLuhan and Williams, then I have to side with Williams. Framing is a human circumstance. This framing however becomes more personal and individual thanks these new technologies.

I would like to conclude with a closing remark on further digitalisation of media in general. We have seen the importance of a centralised medium to bring the message to as many people as necessary. With the digitalisation of television or broadcasting, it has become easier for a person to

choose which broadcast they choose to listen to. This is great for democratisation, but greatly polarises people at the same time. If you get to see only what you want to see, then it means that you almost never get to see what you need to see. I.O. de Vries wrote about the reach for a communication sublime. When finally reaching it, there is always another challenge to face. Maybe, Brecht got his ultimate communication device, but more than a machine is necessary to start a revolution.

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