

ABSTRACT

Title: On the Role of Digital Media in the Occupy Movement. How Online, Convergent Technologies Influence Movements for Social and Political Change.

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The Occupy movement that began with Occupy Wall Street in New York in 2011 proliferated into a global movement of occupations in cities throughout the world. The purpose of this paper is to examine the role of online media in the Occupy movement and how it influences the organisation and efficacy of the movement. Occupy was initiated by an e-mail from *Adbusters* magazine that included the Twitter hashtag #OccupyWallStreet. From the beginning of the movement, online media played a central role in the dissemination of information and the coordination of occupations in physical spaces.

This paper compares the structure of the Occupy movement, both in terms of the occupations distributed globally and the internal structure of individual occupations, to the distributed network of the Internet, where the movement had its genesis. Drawing parallels between the non-hierarchical distributed network and the leaderless, horizontal structure of the Occupy movement, the paper finds that Occupy is to some degree emblematic of the structure of the Internet.

Online media's function as a deliberative space and as a tool for mobilisation is discussed. The paper shows how online media provides an alternative to more tightly controlled mass media and investigates if online participation in social and political movements can lead to further commitment to a movement beyond the realm of the Internet. This is examined in relation to Slavoj Žižek's theory of "interpassivity" (1999).

The use of corporately owned social media sites for communication and coordination within the Occupy movement is examined. The paper investigates how online activism can be commodified and integrated into the capitalist cycle.

In light of these discussions the paper concludes that online media has had a significant influence on the structure of the Occupy movement. This non-hierarchical structure has led to the inability of the movement to agree on demands, but in so doing has enabled it to highlight the systemic inequality of the late capitalist system. Furthermore, the paper asserts that for participation in the movement to be meaningful it must extend beyond interpassive participation on the Internet into visible occupations in physical space.