

Pre-publication author version

## Time of Protest: An Archaeological Perspective on Media Practices

Anne Kaun

### Abstract

The chapter investigates media practices of protest movements from a media archaeological perspective. Rather than analysing media as discourse or narratives, media archaeology considers the material properties that constitute media technologies as well as their temporal and spatial consequences. According to Jussi Parikka media archaeology is interested in ‘materialities of cultural practice, of human activity as embedded in both cognitive and affective appreciations and investments, but also embodied, phenomenological accounts of what we do when we invent, use and adapt media technologies’ (Parikka 2012, p. 163). Hence, in this chapter I investigate the temporal and spatial properties of media technologies employed by activists. The combination of media archaeology and media practice theory is fruitful as it brings together a materialist perspective on media with experiential aspects of media as practice. Empirically, I am drawing on a diachronic, comparative study of media practices of protest movements of the dispossessed. The three movements examined – the unemployed workers’ movement in the 1930s, the tenants’ movement in the 1970s and Occupy Wall Street in 2011 – emerged in the context of large-scale economic crises and represent attempts of filling the discursive void that the crisis situations induced. Based on extensive archival research in combination with interviews with activists, I argue for a shift in media regimes that activists are navigating from mechanical speed to perpetual flow towards digital immediacy and from a space to a hyper-space bias. Based on these shifts activists today are experiencing an increasing desynchronization between media and political practices.

### Introduction

Media technologies play a vital role for the mobilization and organization of protest and social movements. Many studies have emphasized this point, sometimes slightly overstating their importance. Lately more critical approaches that point to the dialectical and at times ambivalent relationship between media practices, media technologies, and political practices have emerged (see for example Dencik & Leistert, 2015). Within these critical studies, the media practice perspective plays a crucial role for pointing out the ambivalent relationship

between technologies' inherent properties and the role of active appropriation by activists (Barassi, 2013, 2015; Velkova, 2017). Although there is a growing field of media practice studies (see introduction of this volume for review), it is still rare to engage with media practices from a historical perspective and discuss the *longue durée* of the role of media technologies for political organizing. A historical perspective is however crucial to examine current developments of citizen media and their importance for political organizing over time.

Media historical approaches on the other hand have emphasized changing imaginaries related to media technologies as well as explored how media are experienced and studied as historical subjects (Gitelman, 2008). Carolyn Marvin (1988), for example, engages with imaginaries and discourses of 'new' technologies in history and argues that

people often imagine that, (...) new technologies will make the world more nearly what it was meant to be all along. Inevitably, both change and the contemplation of change are reciprocal events that expose old ideas to revision from contact with new ones. (...) The past really does survive in the future (p. 235).

Media history has so far, however, shown little interest in media practices and their politics.

In order to introduce an historical approach, the chapter investigates media practices of protest movements from a media archaeological perspective. The combination of media archaeology and media practice theory is fruitful as it combines a materialist perspective on media with experiential aspects of media as practice. Rather than analysing media as discourse or narratives, media archaeology considers the material properties that constitute media technologies as well as their temporal and spatial consequences. According to Jussi Parikka media archaeology is interested in 'materialities of cultural practice, of human activity as embedded in both cognitive and affective appreciations and investments, but also embodied, phenomenological accounts of what we do when we invent, use and adapt media technologies' (Parikka, 2012, p. 163). In order to do so, in this chapter I investigate the temporal properties of media technologies employed by activists. Empirically, I am drawing on a diachronic, comparative study of media practices of protest movements of the dispossessed. The three movements examined – the unemployed workers' movement in the 1930s, the tenants' movement in the 1970s and Occupy Wall Street in 2011 – emerged in the context of large-scale economic crises and represent attempts of filling the discursive void that the crisis situations induced. Based on extensive archival research in combination with interviews with activists, I argue elsewhere for a shift in media regimes that activists are

navigating from mechanical speed to perpetual flow towards digital immediacy and from a space to a hyper-space bias (Kaun, 2016). Based on these shifts activists today are experiencing an increasing desynchronization between media and political practices.

### Historicizing media practices through media archaeology

The media practice approach has emerged as a vital and increasingly diverse field of inquiry within the study of social movements and the media (McCurdy, 2012). John Postill (2010) argues that media practices' background can be traced to different epistemological and ontological traditions within social theory (e.g. Schatzki's or Bourdieu's notion of social practice) or media anthropology. The specific approach applied for the purposes of this chapter can be situated in the field of socially oriented media theory (in contrast to textual analysis, medium theory, and the political economy of the media) as suggested by Nick Couldry (2012). Central to socially oriented media theory is to analyse media in its context rather than in isolation (also referred to as non-media centric approach). Following Couldry (2006), I regard media usage as a part of a complex sphere of social practices. In that sense 'the media sphere is an inseparable part of the social, interacts with many already-existing discourses, and competes with many other discursive machineries' (Carpentier, 2011, p. 146).

Developing ideas of a contextualised analysis of media usage, following Morley and Silverstone (1990), Couldry argues against the 'fallacy' of media-centrism in the study of media. Whereas Silverstone and Morley argue for an analysis of media as a domesticated practice alongside and embedded within other practices, Couldry takes the reasoning one step further; he deconstructs the myth that media are the exclusive access point to the social world, since 'to assume that media are more consequential than other institutions that structure the social world (economic, material, spatial, and so on)' (2006, p. 12) might be misleading. The myth of the mediated centre that Couldry describes is built on the assumption that centralized media are *the* access point to 'central realities of the social world, whatever they are. This myth builds on an underlying myth that society has a centre' (2006, p. 16). This assumption needs to be deconstructed in order not to re-manifest the power that centralized media already wield. Therefore, it is argued, research needs to understand media alongside other social practices and institutions. At the same time, media studies need to look at alternative points of connection within society to broaden the understanding of media's importance to the social sphere. Guided by that premise, Couldry is interested in alternative media (Couldry & Curran, 2003) and alternative media practices (Couldry, 2000) as an expression and realisation of

decentred media studies. In that sense, he touches upon the question of the ‘object of media studies’, which has been a highly-debated issue since the institutionalisation of media and communication studies as a discipline (cf. Special issue of *Journal of Communication* 1983, Noelle-Neumann, 1975). Following this approach, the chapter is focusing on critical media practices that are directed towards centralized mainstream media and question their role for sense-making processes in contemporary societies.

Nick Couldry (2012) develops the notion of media practices and defines practices as concerned with regularity of action. Media practices in turn are concerned with specific regularities in actions that relate to media and regularities of context and resources that enable media-related actions. Practices are social and linked to possibilities, constraints, and questions of power. Furthermore, practices are related to needs. Media practices then are concerned with the need for coordination, interaction, community, trust, and freedom. Taking media practices as a theoretical backdrop also enables to think normatively about the media and the question of how we should live with them. Ultimately media practices stand in for ‘what people are doing in relation to media in the contexts in which they act’ (Couldry, 2012, p. 35). Following Couldry’s understanding, this encompasses practices that are firstly directed to media (e.g. letter to the editor), secondly actions that involve media, but not necessarily have them as object or major aim (e.g. everyday talk that take media content as a starting point) and thirdly actions that depend on the prior existence, presence or functioning of media (e.g. Facebook communities).

However, Raymond Williams already in 1977 pointed to material aspects of media practices, namely that ‘[p]ractice (...) has always to be defined as work on a material for a specific purpose within certain necessary social conditions’ (p. 160). In order to extend and strengthen this argument of considering material aspects of media, I draw on media archaeology. Emphasizing the materiality of media artefacts, media archaeology shifts the focus of analysis slightly. Rather than analysing media as discourse or narratives, media archaeology considers the material properties that constitute media technologies as well as their temporal and spatial consequences. Media archaeology’s aim is to provide a ‘rediscovery of cultural and technical layers of previous media’ (Ernst, 2011) and focuses therefore on the materiality of media establishing nonlinear histories and considering forking paths in media technologies’ development. Media archaeology lacks however a coherent object of study or method. It rather constitutes a disparate field of inquiry that ranges from studies interested in forgotten,

unsuccessful or imaginary media to questions of machine time (Ernst, 2011) or deep time of the media (Zielinski, 2006) and geological properties of media (Parikka, 2015). The inquiries share, however, that they are turning away from questions of representation and hermeneutics towards questions of the material object media in order to challenge discourses of newness that are often put forward in media studies (Mattern, 2017). Wolfgang Ernst gives the following example to illustrate the media archaeological approach:

While a Greek vase can be interpreted by simply being looked at, a radio or a computer does not reveal its essence by monumentally being there but only when being processed by electromagnetic waves or calculating processes (Ernst, 2011, p.241).

According to Jussi Parikka media archaeology is interested in ‘materialities of cultural practice, of human activity as embedded in both cognitive and affective appreciations and investments, but also embodied, phenomenological accounts of what we do when we invent, use and adapt media technologies’ (Parikka 2012, p.163). The ‘techno-epistemological configurations underlying the discursive surface of mass media’ (Ernst, 2011, p.239) in connection with questions of adaptation and resistance against hegemonic media regimes through activist practices are therefore at the heart of analysis. Considering what Ernst has called the *Eigenzeit* of media technologies vis-à-vis with temporalities of political, organizational, and spatial practices of activists that are engaged in the movements contributes a fresh perspective on protest.

While media archaeology lacks people, media practice research lacks a historical and material contextualization of what people are doing with media. The suggestion here is to approach media practices through a media archaeological lens and ask what are the consequences of employing certain media technologies for political mobilization and how these engagements change over time. Instead of considering representations or discourses of and about protest movements, the analysis focuses on their relationship to hegemonic regimes of temporality that emerge as properties of media technologies. The combination of media archaeology and media practice theory is fruitful as it allows for linking a materialist perspective on media with experiential aspects of media as practice. According to Raymond Williams it is the concrete practice that gives meaning to media technology and its particular properties as ‘the new technology is itself a product of a particular social system, and will be developed as an

apparently autonomous process of innovation only to the extent that we fail to identify and challenge its real agencies' (Williams, 1974, p.135).

### *Archaeologies of media practices of the dispossessed*

The analysis builds on three case studies that consider the – according to the appearance in mainstream news media and secondary sources (Castells, 1977, 1980; Gitlin, 2012; Gould-Wartofsky, 2015; Piven & Cloward, 1977) – most relevant protest movements that emerged in the context of major economic crises in the US. The idea of considering crisis-related protest movements draws on Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht's collaborative, unfinished project *Krise und Kritik* (Wizisla, 2004). They argued that crisis situations constituting crucial turning points in history both make possible and require new forms of critique. For them these new forms of critique should be formulated by intellectuals and artists to turn the transitional moment or critical juncture into positive social change. Similarly, I consider protest movements as direct reactions to crisis situations that aim to fill the crisis induced void with new meaning and promote social change. Following ideas of media archaeology, I trace media practices of protest movements over time in order to engage with shifts and continuities through the lens of temporal regimes that are inherent to dominant media technologies.

For the analysis, I draw on archive and interview material related to a) the Great Depression 1929 and the unemployed workers movement, b) the oil and fiscal crisis in early 1970s and new urban movements here particularly the rent strike and squatters' movement and c) the Great Recession 2007/2008 and the Occupy Wall Street Movement. The interviews were conducted with activists within the Occupy movement based in Philadelphia and New York. They had different roles within the movement ranging from central positions in the core organising groups and subgroups to more peripheral roles. All have however spent considerable amounts of time in encampments in Manhattan and Philadelphia. In total eight different activists were interviewed. For historical contextualization, members of the Interference Archive in Brooklyn were interviewed on the role of history writing from below. Furthermore, I participated in workshops, seminar series on community archiving, and volunteered as part of the community cataloguing initiative. The selected movements are organizational and ideological diverse. It is however not the aim to reconstruct their genealogy in detail. Instead their media practices figure as empirical entry points to analyse changes in media technologies over time. Furthermore, considering the role of social media

vis-à-vis previous mobilizations allows to historically contextualize the role of media technologies for protest movements.

### *Unemployed Workers and Mechanical Speed*

The unemployed workers' movements emerged in the context of the 1930s Great Depression in the United States. Following the crash of the stock exchange in 1929, the number of unemployed exploded, increasing from half a million in October 1929 to more than 4 million in January 1930 (1932: 24 %) and the numbers kept growing to 9 million in October 1931 (1933: 25%) (Piven & Cloward, 1977). Unemployment and shrinking salaries of those still in employment had devastating effects on the daily lives of the people going hand in hand with growing malnutrition and diseases such as tuberculosis. There were numerous organizations and political groups that aimed to organize the unemployed and mobilize them for direct actions such as marches, demonstrations, and occupations of relief offices. The main aims and approaches of the organizations were very diverse. While the Labor Research Association, for example, focused mainly on gathering information on unemployment and its conditions, the Socialist and Communist Parties aimed to establish organizational structures and advocated for improved relief programmes. Smaller local organizations such as the Greenwich House in New York City focused specifically on the local conditions, housing meetings of unemployed from Greenwich Village as well as the National Unemployment League. The League for Industrial Democracy (out of which the SDS – Students for a Democratic Society emerged in the 1960s) organized nationwide lectures, lecture circuits, and chapter meetings. In order to organize and mobilize the unemployed workers these organizations used a sophisticated set of different media ranging from shop papers written by unemployed workers and distributed in the factories to radio talks as Harold Lasswell and Dorothy Blumenstock (1939) show in their comprehensive study of communist media in Chicago that was published in 1939. Although the radio gained importance, the main way to inform members and non-members remained however printed outlets. From 1932, for example, clip sheets containing major news were introduced. They had the major purpose to be reprinted by approximately 500 farmers and workers papers.

In the 1930s organizers of the unemployed workers movement predominantly relied on printed outlets that were reproduced with the help of low-cost printing presses – so called mimeographs. The employment of machines to reproduce brochures, pamphlets, and shop papers helped to speed up the process and consequently it was possible to reach out to more

people. At the same time, media practices relying on technologies such as the mimeograph were still characterized by collective approaches both on the level of production, distribution, and consumption. There were for example often between three to four workers operating mimeographs in an efficient manner. The distribution was often organized by smaller groups of workers, who distributed pamphlets, factory papers, and leaflets in the streets or in the factories often under the threat of being arrested and fired. The content was as well consumed in groups rather than individually in cafes and at street corners. In that sense, even if the reproduction added to the speed of production and amount of copies, it was still an ‘effortful’ speed that needed work and engagement of a collective rather than individuals.

For Walter Benjamin reproducibility encompassed that media images no longer had a unique place in time, which coincided with its increased mobility. He suggests ‘(...) technical reproduction can place the copy of the original in situations which the original itself cannot attain. Above all, it enables the original to meet the recipient halfway, (...)’ (Benjamin, 1936/2008, p. 21). This argument suggests a democratization of the image through its reproduction, but also political potential to spread it to the masses for resistance against fascism. Benjamin’s arguments resonate with the experience of acceleration of speed with the possibilities of mechanical reproduction in the 1930s. Although Benjamin points out the dangers of immature usage of technology and the increasing alienation of recipients, he remains hopeful of the potential that comes with reproducibility for political mobilization of the masses in the age of *mechanical speed* that was the dominant temporal regime that the unemployed workers navigated.

#### *Tenants’ Movement and Perpetual Flow*

The early 1970s were marked by economic crisis specifically the oil crisis as well. New York in particular was also faced with a fiscal crisis that resulted in austerity measures and strict budget cuts that left many unemployed. Manuel Castells (1980) discusses in his book *Economic crisis and the American society* why there were no mass protests comparably to the 1930s although the economic situation was similarly severe. Castells argues that growing police violence with new special units, an ideological delegitimization of political protest post 1968/69 radicalization, and the absence of an immediate political alternative led to a shift from mass mobilization to individual violence visible in increasing crime rates. However, he had hopes for what he called new urban movements. One of which is the tenants’ movement in New York that aimed to advocate for tenants’ rights against increasingly hostile housing

conditions. The scarcity of low-cost housing resulted from a combination of austerity measures and deregulation of the housing market. A paradox housing situation emerged with empty units that were abandoned by the owners while large numbers of people were desperately in search of affordable housing. After considerable decay of housing facilities, owners often turned the vacant units instead into high-end housing or office spaces (Gold, 2014).

Since 1959 the Metropolitan Council on Housing was the central organization for tenants in New York. Over the years the Met Council continuously professionalized their work and support of local tenants' organizations particularly in terms of media practices. They arranged workshops on publicity, press releases, and television trainings, held lists of press and television contacts, as well as documented the appearance of tenants' related questions in mainstream media. Especially after 1973 numerous new activists and organization aimed to organize aggrieved tenants, which led to the emergence of multiple federations that constituted an increasing diversification of strategies mirroring the diversifying socio-economic backgrounds of participants in the tenants' movement.

The organizers of the tenants' movement in the 1970s navigated an increasingly complex media ecology ranging from mainstream newspapers to community radio and papers and television news. Hence, in the 1970s there is a further acceleration of speed in the (re)production process of media content that intersects with the increased commercialization and globalization of the media technologies employed. Analysing television as the dominant media technology of the 1970s, Raymond Williams (1974) is especially concerned with a change from sequence as programming to sequence as flow. Referring to flow, he aims to capture the integration of previously separate segments, e.g. a theatre play or musical piece, through commercial breaks and trailers. Commercial breaks and trailers for future programs create a constant flow of parallel narratives capturing the viewer for the whole evening. Writing at the threshold to the 24 hours news cycle, Raymond Williams already captures the experience of a constant stream of new experiences that television offered, while diminishing real beginnings and endings of the presented program elements. Organizers in the 1970s had to apply tactics to insert their messages in this perpetual flow of commercial television and other formats. The tenants' movement and the met council on housing chose an events-based approach to intercept the dominant temporal regime of *perpetual flow*.

One most prominent examples of this approach is the Housing Crimes Trial that an activist coalition organized on the 6 December 1970 at Columbia University. The organizing coalition headed by the Metropolitan Council of Housing consisted of I Wor Kuen, the Black Panthers, the Young Lords, the City Wide Coordinating Committee of Welfare Rights, Social Service Employees, and several smaller community organizations. The event attracted between 1,000 and 2,000 spectators. The nine-hour trial was headed by seven peoples' judges, including representatives from the Young Lords, the Black Panthers, and the Metropolitan Council on Housing, who invited tenants, squatters, and community organizers to share their experiences of outrageous housing conditions, landlords, and the ignorance of city officials. The two main aims of the event were to establish a platform for shared experiences related to the precarious housing situation in New York at that time and to attract wider attention with the help of mainstream media in particular television. In order to reach the latter goal, the Met Council provided media training workshops and handbooks to professionalize the activist media practices adopting the dominant media logic. Through the professionalization as well as establishing events-based, spectacular direct actions the activists hoped to be able to intercept the perpetual flow of television and to receive broader attention and consequently support for their cause.

### *Occupy Wall Street and Digital Immediacy*

The third movement considered here - the Occupy Wall Street movement - emerged in the aftermath of the so-called Great Recession (Foster & McChesney, 2012). Although OWS has been explicitly multi-voiced and there exists a variety of narratives concerning the movement, I will try to briefly provide an overview of the major formative events of the movement and in that way partly reconstruct the dominant narrative told about OWS. In July 2011, Adbusters, the notorious facilitator of anti-consumerism campaigns, launched a call to occupy Wall Street by introducing the hashtag #occupywallstreet on Twitter. After online mobilization, a few dozen people followed the call on 17 September 2011. Since Wall Street was strongly secured by police force, the occupiers turned to the close by Zuccotti Park. The small privately owned square became the place for camping, campaigning, and deliberating for the up-coming weeks until the first eviction in November 2011 (Graeber, 2013). The number of activists in the camp grew surprisingly quickly and developed into a diverse group of occupiers being based on what has been characterized as leaderlessness and non-violence (Bolton, Welty, Nayak, & Malone, 2013), but even these two notions were contested. Hence, the movement was and is characterized by a non-consensus about ethics and advocated for a

diversity of tactics, while particularly stressing the importance of space through linking the movement to the long tradition of occupation and reclaiming of public spaces.<sup>1</sup>

While OWS, similarly to the earlier two movements, created a rich media ecology including printed outlets like flyers, fanzines, and a newspaper, as well as video and live streaming, a strong focus was on the participation and visibility in corporate social media. Aiming for broad attention of the movement and its discussions, the occupiers contributed to the production of digital media content despite being critical of the corporate background and business models of these platforms. The contribution and use of corporate social media can be analysed in terms of communicative capitalism that predominantly builds on the circulation of messages and the logic that the ‘exchange value of the messages’ dominates, rather than the ‘use value’ (Dean, 2008, 2012). Dean suggests that network communication technologies, which are based on ideals of discussion and participation, intertwine capitalism and democracy. Communicative capitalism expanding with the growth of global telecommunications becomes hence the single ideological formation (Dean, 2012). Content or the use value of the exchanged messages becomes secondary or even irrelevant. Hence, any response to them becomes irrelevant as well, and any political potential disperses into the perpetual flow of communication (Dean, 2009, 2010). One of the major principles of communicative capitalism is furthermore to accelerate the speed of circulation in order to minimize turn-over time and increase the production of surplus value (Manzerolle & Kjösen, 2012). As digital media enhance personalization, they enable new trajectories and pathways between production, exchange, and consumer. In that sense, personalization as an organizational principle of digital media enhances the already accelerated speed of exchanges, which is taken to its extreme, namely the suspension of circulation in the age of *digital immediacy*. For the case of OWS the focus on exchange value rather than use value becomes particularly apparent when considering the overemphasis on quantifications of social media visibility in terms of uploads, clicks, likes, and followers both by academics and commentators. DeLuca and co-authors suggest, for example, that social media were quickly filling up with Occupy Wall Street: On the first day of occupation more than 4,300 mentions of OWS on Twitter were counted exploding to 25,148 until 2 October 2011. After three months there were 91,400 OWS-related videos uploaded on YouTube (DeLuca, Lawson, &

---

<sup>1</sup> Michael Gould-Wartofsky (2015) links the occupation of Zuccotti park for example to the Landless Workers Movement in Brazil that emerged in the 1980s and the squatters’ movement of the 1970s reclaiming affordable housing through occupation.

Sun, 2012). This overemphasis on metrics is partly reflected among the activists involved in working groups that focused on social media. There was a shared understanding that visibility and presence in social media was crucial for the movement. Sasha, of the Media Working Group for example reflects on the entanglement of offline direct action and online mobilization painting a picture of a closely intertwined ecology of media practices including live streams social media:

And of course, the marches they kept doing. There was a ton of marches all the time and there were always live streams. And having the convenience of having a live stream capability in your cell phone, which is about the most user-friendly thing I have ever seen in my life (...). But everything that was being streamed was also tweeted out. By like all the people in the park and other people who were following people in the park. (...) They tweet that out and it gets tweeted and retweet and others start watching it as well. (Interview with Sasha, Media Working Group, OWS).

At the same time, it is important to emphasize the diversity of media practices within OWS. Aaron, a central member of the Tech Ops working group, mentions during our interview for example that there was a clear distinction between what he calls ‘social media people’ within the Media Working Group and the technical-oriented group that built the administrative digital infrastructure for the General Assembly and the working groups. While the ‘social media people’ focused on playing according to the logic of social media that was in turn producing an acceptable narrative for mainstream news media as well, the Tech Ops Working Group tried to implement an open source infrastructure that resembled the ideals of horizontal and participatory decision-making. Both groups rarely shared any overlaps in terms of concrete projects or personnel.

Hence, while there were attempts to build a digital infrastructure that resembled the principles of OWS’s political organizing, there was a strong focus on following social media logics including the need to constantly update and produce content for different streams and accounts. This need to permanently produce media content comes to stand in a stark contrast with the time-consuming meetings to build collective and participatory decisions. Hence in a way, social media practices and practices of political decision-making became desynchronized (Kaun, 2015).

### Media regimes and media practices

As argued above, activists have to navigate a dominant temporality established by – among other social forces and institutions – media technologies that is here defined as time regime. Veronica Barassi (2015) refers in this context to a current hegemonic construction of social time – in her case more specifically immediacy – that produces potential conflicts with other layers of temporality in everyday life and particularly protest practices. I choose the notion of regime to emphasize the hegemonic character of a dominant temporality that is established through media technologies and discursive practices. Regimes have not only a political meaning referring to a form of government or period of rule, but also describe a regular pattern of occurrence or action and as characteristic behavior and orderly procedure. In that sense, temporal regimes of media establish particular regularities and orders of processes that are most often taken for granted. In the analysis, I have investigated the taken-for-granted time regimes with which protest movements are grappling. In a certain sense, time regimes describe a discursive closure that stands in contrast to struggles about the meaning and purpose of media technologies, for example on a regulatory level (Jakobsson and Stiernstedt, 2010; Pickard, 2015). However, as I have shown elsewhere, through their media practices, activists relate in different ways to dominant temporal regimes. They either attack, adapt, formulate alternatives, or abstain from the dominant media regime (Kaun, 2016). For example, the Archiving Working Group within OWS collected both physical objects and digital artefacts in order to preserve the history and development of the movement on their own terms. In that sense, they tried to counter the dominant regimes of digital immediacy and ephemerality of social media. This example shows the dialectical relationship between a temporal regime that dominates public discourse and practices and the agentic potential of renegotiating and questioning specific aspects of the dominant regime.

Crises, such as the Great Recession, give new meaning and visibility to these ongoing struggles about media technologies and potentially unlock the established discursive closure of media regimes. In connection with protest practices, they hence become an entry point and empirical lens to analyse and make sense of social change. In terms of the historical foundations of the struggles, I have identified both continuities and shared features of protest movements in moments of economic crisis, especially when it comes to the hope connected with media innovations for furthering social change. In the 1930s, intellectuals such as Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin had high hopes for the radio to give new voice to the struggles of the working class. In the 1970s, the Met Council considered engaging with cable television in

order to attract broader attention and support. In both cases the media innovation was considered as a harbinger for more democratization of the public sphere and discourse. However, the three movements are also characterized by fundamental changes when it comes to their media practices and the structuring of time. There is a fundamental change from mechanical speed and perpetual flow towards digital immediacy. While digital immediacy emerges as such a hegemonic force, it makes accounting for the different temporalities of political protest difficult.

## Conclusion

The suggestion to combine the media practice perspective with a media archaeological approach does not seem straight forward, particularly thinking of the dispute between Raymond Williams and Marshall McLuhan (Fuchs, 2017; Jones, 1998) in which Williams considered McLuhan a technological determinist disregarding questions of power and ideology in the analysis of media. Williams, instead of focusing on the character of media technologies as such, considered media in their broader societal context as forms of social practices. Media archaeology with strong links to medium theory and partly anti-humanist tendency has very little to do with an interest in media practices that is inspired and informed by cultural studies. This chapter is, however, not about dissolving this fundamental schism. Instead it aims to show how a focus on media practice adds to our understanding of how media technologies configure time and space that media archaeology has been interested in. My analysis is an attempt to balance a material perspective that emphasizes the properties of media technologies with an acknowledgement of agency. In many ways, the media practices approach often overemphasizes the agency of for example activists in choosing and adopting media for their purposes, while the media archaeological approach foregrounds technology inherent properties that shape possible practices. On the one hand, media archaeology often disregards the role of agency, on the other hand media practice research often lacks a historical and material contextualization of what people are doing with media. At the same time, the media practice approach adds the perspective of actively shaping of media technologies by practices to the analysis. It is hence the intertwinement of both approaches that fruitfully allows for a dialectical analysis of the relationship between media technologies' properties and media practices.

This is achieved here by focusing on the temporal dimension in media practices and media archaeology. Focusing on the temporality of media and practices related to them allows to

excavate how media technologies function in the context of political participation and mobilization. Developing the notion of temporal regimes of media brings media practices and the perspective of media archaeology together. Time regimes are here defined as discursive, hegemonic formations that activists have to relate to and navigate.

## References

- Barassi, V. (2013). When materiality counts: The social and political importance of activist magazines in Europe. *Global Media and Communication*, 9(2), 135-151.  
doi:10.1177/1742766513479717
- Barassi, V. (2015). Social Media, Immediacy and the Time for Democracy: Critical Reflections on Social Media as 'Temporalizing Practices'. In L. Dencik & O. Leistert (Eds.), *Critical Perspectives on Social Media and Protest: Between Control and Emancipation* (pp. 73-90). London, New York: Rowman and Littlefield International.
- Benjamin, W. (1936/2008). The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version. In M. Jennings, B. Doherty, & T. Levin (Eds.), *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings of Media* (pp. 19-55). Cambridge, London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Bolton, M., Welty, E., Nayak, M., & Malone, C. (2013). We had a front row seat to a Downtown revolution. In E. Welty, M. Bolton, M. Nayak, & C. Malone (Eds.), *Occupying Political Science. The Occupy Wall Street Movement from New York to the World* (pp. 1-24). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bray, M. (2013). *Translating Anarchy: The Anarchism of Occupy Wall Street*. Winchester, Washington: Zero Books.
- Carpentier, N. (2011). *Media and Participation. A site of ideological - democratic struggle*. Bristol, Chicago: Intellect.
- Castells, M. (1977). *The Urban Question. A Marxist Approach*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Castells, M. (1980). *The Economic Crisis and American Society*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Couldry, N. (2000). *The place of media power : pilgrims and witnesses of the media age*. London: Routledge.
- Couldry, N. (2006). *Listening Beyond the Echoes. Media, Ethics, and Agency in an Uncertain World*. Boulder, London: Paradigm Publisher.
- Couldry, N. (2012). *Media, Society, World. Social Theory and Digital Media Practice*. Cambridge, Malden: Polity.
- Couldry, N., & Curran, J. (2003). *Contesting media power : alternative media in a networked world*. Lanham, Md. ; Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Dean, J. (2008). Communicative Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics. In M. Bolter (Ed.), *Digital Media and Democracy* (pp. 101-121). Cambridge, London: MIT Press.
- Dean, J. (2009). Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics. In. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Dean, J. (2010). *Blog Theory: Feedback and Capture in the Circuits of Drive*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Dean, J. (2012). *The Communist Horizon*. London, New York: Verso.
- DeLuca, K., Lawson, S., & Sun, Y. (2012). Occupy Wall Street on the Public Screens of Social Media: The Many Framings of the Birth of a Protest Movement.

*Communication, Culture & Critique*, 5(4), 483--509. doi:10.1111/j.1753-9137.2012.01141.x

- Dencik, L., & Leistert, O. (2015). Introduction. In L. Dencik & O. Leistert (Eds.), *Critical Perspectives on Social Media and Protest* (pp. 1-12). London, New York: Rowman and Littlefield International.
- Ernst, W. (2011). Media Archaeography: Method and Machine versus History and Narrative of the Media. In E. Huhtamo & J. Parikka (Eds.), *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications and Implications*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Foster, J. B., & McChesney, R. (2012). *The Endless Crisis. How Monopoly-Finance Capital Produces Stagnation and Upheaval from the USA to China*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Fuchs, C. (2017). Raymond Williams' Communicative Materialism. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 20(6), 744-762.
- Gitelman, L. (2008). *Always Already New. Media, History, and the Data of Culture*. Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Gitlin, T. (2012). *Occupy Nation*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Gold, R. (2014). *When Tenants claimed the City: The Struggle for Citizenship in New York City Housing*. Urbana, Chicago, Springfield: University of Illinois Press.
- Gould-Wartofsky, M. (2015). *The occupiers: the making of the 99 percent movement*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Graeber, D. (2013). *The Democracy Project. A History, A Crises, A Movement*. New York: Spiegel and Grau.
- Jones, P. (1998). The technology is not the cultural form?: Raymond William's sociological critique of Marshall McLuhan. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 23(4).
- Kaun, A. (2015). Regimes of time: Media practices of the dispossessed. *Time & Society*, online first.
- Kaun, A. (2016). "Our time to act has come": desynchronisation, social media time and protest movements. *Media, Culture and Society*, 39(4), 469-486.
- Kaun, A. (2016). *Crisis and Critique. A History of Media Participation in Times of Crisis*. London: Zedbooks.
- Lasswell, H. D., & Blumenstock, D. (1939). *World revolutionary propaganda: a Chicago study*. New York: Knopf.
- Manzerolle, V., & Kjøsén, A. M. (2012). The Communication of Capital: Digital Media and the Logic of Acceleration. *TripleC*, 10(214-229).
- Marvin, C. (1988). *When Old Technologies Where New. Thinking About Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mattern, S. (2017). *Code and Clay, Data and Dirt: Five Thousand Years of Urban Media*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- McCurdy, P. (2012). Social Movements, Protest and Mainstream Media. *Sociology Compass*, 6(3), 244-255.
- Morley, D., & Silverstone, R. (1990). Domestic Communication - Technologies and Meanings. *Media, Culture & Society*, 12(1), 31-55.
- Noelle-Neumann, E. (1975). Publizistik- und Kommunikationswissenschaft: Ein Wissenschaftsbereich oder ein Themenkatalog? (*Publizistik and communication studies: a research area or a catalogue of topics?*). *Publizistik*, 20(3), 743-748.
- Parikka, J. (2012). *What is media archaeology?* Cambridge, Malden: Polity.
- Parikka, J. (2015). *A Geology of Media*. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Piven, F. F., & Cloward, R. A. (1977). *Poor People's Movements. Why They Succeed, How They Fail*. New York: Vintage Books.

- Postill, J. (2010). Introduction: Theorising Media and Practice. In B. Bräuchler & J. Postill (Eds.), *Theorising Media and Practice* (pp. 1-34). New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Roberts, A. (2012). Why the Occupy Movement failed. *Public Administration Review*, 72(5), 754-762.
- Velkova, J. (2017). Repairing and developing software infrastructures: The case of Morevna Project in Russia. *New Media and Society*, online first.
- Williams, R. (1974). *Television. Technology and Cultural Form*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Wizisla, E. (2004). *Benjamin und Brecht. Die Geschichte einer Freundschaft. [Benjamin and Brecht. The Story of a Friendship]*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Zielinski, S. (2006). *Deep Time of the Media. Toward an Archaeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means*. Cambridge, London: MIT Press.

---

<sup>i</sup> The author uses pseudonyms for interviewees throughout the text.