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This Space Belongs to Us! Protest Spaces in Times of Accelerating Capitalism

We are here taking up this space because we’re saying NO MORE.

—Speaker at Ferguson solidarity rally in Philadelphia, November 2014

Protest movements are fundamentally about the production and control of space. Whether in a discursive or physical sense, protesters aim to carve out spaces that give room to their political causes. The negotiation and contestation of the production of space has potentially changed in the context of social media that connect activists over vast distances and in real time. In line with that, media scholars, urban geographers and sociologists have attributed changes in the production and perception of space to emerging media technologies that are extending the human body (McLuhan 1964), contributing to deterritorialization (Tomlinson 1999) and space-time compression (Harvey 1990). What are then the strategies of protest movements that are actively challenging the hegemonic logic of the production of space and how are the strategies relating to communication technologies? What are the consequences of changes in the production of protest spaces for activism in terms of temporality? This chapter investigates the changes in the production of space of protest movements in the context of advancing capitalism that is increasingly based on digital communication technologies. In that sense it contributes to the discussion of how contentious politics and the production of space
are changing with social media while contextualizing these changes historically by putting current protests into dialogue with previous movements and their media practices.

The questions outlined above are investigated by drawing on an in-depth analysis of Occupy Wall Street and one of its major direct actions, the march on Brooklyn Bridge in October 2011. In order to contextualize the production of space in relation to temporal structures historically, the chapter considers two earlier protest movements that emerged in the United States in the context of the Great Depression in the 1930s and the oil and fiscal crisis in the early 1970s. By way of considering these historical case studies, I aim to complicate the current overemphasis on the role of social media for protest movements. Furthermore, I aim to trace significant changes in organizing and mobilizing protest that are related to media technologies over time specifically when it comes to the production of space.  

Protest in Space and Time

Marches interrupt the daily stream of traffic and the routes of pedestrians (Merrifield 2013), protest camps establish self-organized spatial infrastructures (Feigenbaum, Frenzel and McCurdy 2013), community archives provide a space for the preservation of digital and material representations documenting histories from the margins (Flinn, Stevens and Shepherd 2009), alternative and social media provide a discursive space for radical politics: protest practices are always also practices that are shaping spaces and encounters between people. As Merrifield argues, when people are coming together there is a realization of commonalities ‘because bodies and minds take hold in a space that is at once territorial and deterritorial, in a time that isn’t clock or calendar time but eternal time’ (Merrifield 2013, 34).

Since the 1980s, there has been a strong interest in space and spatial practices in social sciences and humanities. With the growing research interest in different disciplines and fields, the understanding of space was extended and encompasses its physical appearance (Castells
1977), its social character (Bourdieu 1989), discursive formation and mode of production (Lefebvre 1991).

Related to the globalization debate, media technologies came to be understood as annihilating space; for example, shortening distances and connecting remote areas. The fundamental argument is that media technologies are freeing us from the boundaries of space and constitute the end of geography (Mosco 2005). Paul Virilio (1986) suggests that ‘space is no longer in geography—it is in electronics’. In that context, politics become less about physical space, but about the time regimes of technologies, which is what he calls a shift from geo- to chrono-politics.

This focus on mobility and space as distance has been critically addressed by Doreen Massey (2005) arguing that space encompasses more than distance and continues to matter. She suggested that proximity is central for human experience, but multiple forms and dimensions are constituting space as a process and social practice. Hence, space is always in the making (Crang and Thrift 2000; Massey 2005). Furthermore, the myth of the end of geography has been debunked by commentators reminding us of the material basis of media technologies that are supposedly substituting space (Jansson 2007). Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller (2013, 90), for example, argue that ‘it is as if telecommunications, cell phones, tablets, cameras, computers and so on sprang magically from a green meritocracy of creativity, with by-products of code, not smoke’; however, these media technologies are actively produced and consume large landscapes in the form of server farms and data centres that remain invisible for the majority of their consumers. Hence, I follow Andre Jansson when he argues that ‘the spatial turn must incorporate a material turn as well—a turn towards the conditions and practices (constellations and movements of people and objects) which put communication in (or out of) place, as well as towards the spatial materialities and sensibilities of communication’ (Jansson 2007, 186).
The discussion of the end of geography and the annihilation of distance is embedded in a social structure characterized by economic, politico-institutional and ideological configurations (Castells 1977), and while the idea that media technologies help us to overcome the boundaries of space persists, physical public spaces are disappearing as they are turned increasingly into commercial areas and security zones heavily controlled by police forces. Jeremy Nemeth and Justin Hollander (2010), for example, analyse the shrinking of public spaces in New York and discuss the consequences for democratic conduct and society. Paolo Gerbaudo, referring to Mike Davis, argues that ‘the public space of the new megastructures and supermalls have supplanted traditional streets and supplanted their spontaneity. Inside malls, office centres, and cultural complexes, public activities are sorted out into strictly functional compartments under the gaze of private police forces’ (Gerbaudo 2012, 105).

At the same time, the domination of space by certain actors often intersects with the domination of media technologies and the other way around. In that context, protest movements challenge the hegemonic production and ordering of space. Hence it is pertinent to ask whether radical protest practices challenge the currents of both the dominant logic of spatial production and the role of media technologies for these spatial practices. In this chapter, I aim to engage with these questions and trace changes in the production of space that are related to changes of dominant media technologies since the 1930s. Drawing on Lefebvre’s notion of the production of space and three case studies of protest movements of the dispossessed that emerged at critical junctures of capitalism, I follow the change from a space bias to hyper-space bias and mechanical speed to digital immediacy. An ideological move from space-bias to hyper-space bias is based on the assumption that social media ‘blur the boundaries not only between perceived and/ or conceived spatial categories (public-private, local-global, etc.), but also between the processes (material, symbolic and imaginary)
that constitute space itself’ (Jansson 2007, 185). The changes in temporality are particularly based on the decrease in circulation time of information with the help of social media towards real time and immediacy in which production and consumption are collapsed. Immediacy is here understood in terms of acceleration of circulation towards direct delivery. Similarly, real time captures access to media content without perceptible delay (Weltevrede, Helmond and Gerlitz 2014). This acceleration, however, often obscures the peculiar process of mediation and mediated meaning production. In that context, media technologies in general and social media in particular have certain properties that allow for particular content production. This is to say that digital immediacy encompasses an acceleration in production, distribution and consumption time, but does not preclude mediation and experiences beyond the immediate (Thompson 1995; Silverstone 2007).

Social Media and the Production of Space

Theoretical engagements with the notion of space shifted from questions of the production of objects in space to the production of space itself. Lefebvre could be considered a key figure in this shift of perspective. Lefebvre distinguishes between three forms of producing space: the representation of space (space as conceived), the representational space (space as perceived) and spatial practices (space as lived and experienced). The representation of space is concerned with the physical form of space that is built and used. Representational space considers practices of ‘knowing’ space, such as maps and mathematics, producing space as a mental construct. Spatial practices, in contrast, are concerned with space as it is produced and changed over time through its specific use at the intersection of the physical appearance of space and its imagined form (Elden 2007).

In his seminal work The Production of Space, Lefebvre dwells on a clear link between the production of space and technology as well as knowledge. Technology and knowledge
have a particular relevance for the mode of production and every mode of production is linked to its own kind of space (Lefebvre 1991, 31).

What constitutes the forces of production, according to Marx and Engels? Nature, first of all, plays a part, then labour, hence the organization (or division) of labour, and hence also the instruments of labour, including technology, and, ultimately, knowledge. (Lefebvre 1991, 69)

In Lefebvre’s sense technologies are essential to understand any kind of production process, including the production of space. As the current capitalist mode of production is increasingly—not exclusively—based on communication and information (Fuchs 2010; Castells 2000), technologies such as social media that assist in the production, resources, forms of labour and commodities are of particular importance.

This chapter is based on material collected for a larger project entitled Crisis and Critique (Kaun forthcoming). The overarching aim of the project is to explore the interconnection between crisis and critique and to ask whether crisis situations can open up new opportunities as well as require new forms of radical critique. This background links to Walter Benjamin and Bertold Brecht’s journal project Krise und Kritik that they pursued in the 1930s. The journal never actually materialized, however, in several editorial meetings and written exchanges Brecht and Benjamin developed the idea of discussing the interconnections between crisis and critique.

My project traces forms of media participation in different crisis contexts, namely the Great Depression 1929, the crisis of the early 1970s and the Great Recession 2008. These eclipses of crisis moments are understood as nodal points around which avant-garde protest
groups formed and participated in public discourse as forms of critique. Empirically, the analysis builds on three case studies that consider the—according to the appearance in mainstream news media and secondary sources—most relevant protest movements that emerged in the context of the three major economic crises: (a) the unemployed workers movement, (b) new urban movements here particularly the rent strike and squatters movement and (c) the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement. However, the focus here is on the latter, the OWS movement. The three movements represent very diverse organization structures. While the unemployed workers movement was dominated by the work of political parties such as the Communist Party, a civil society organization the Metropolitan Council on Housing had major importance for the tenants’ movement. The OWS movement in contrast emphasized it leaderless, multivoiced structure. In this context of the movements, structures media technologies employed for organization and mobilization have specific temporal and spatial affordances that enable or constrain the movements in reaching their goals.

The chapter draws on a variety of methods ranging from in-depth archival work investigating documents of central organizations that aimed to organize the dispossessed including personal papers’ collections of political organizers such as Carl Winter (Chair of the Communist Party of Michigan), Sam Winn (activist and an organizer in District Council 9 of the International Brotherhood of Painters and Allied Trades), Sam Adams Darcy (organizer and leading official in the Communist Party USA) and Jacob Benjamin Salutsky (director of education and cultural activities of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America) and autobiographies of other central figures such as William Z Foster (General Secretary of the Communist Party USA), Sadie van Veen Amter and Israel Amter (founding members of the Communist Party USA) in the 1930s and extensive records of the Metropolitan Housing Council from the 1970s. The materials for the analysis of the rent strike movement also include project materials of a large scale study on the tenants’ movement led by Ronald
Lawson, including interview and observation protocols as well as student essays and master theses. In order to investigate the Occupy movement I conducted in-depth interviews with activists being involved in the OWS encampment and more particularly with the work of the media group. Beyond the in-depth interviews in the case of OWS, I also analysed central publications and outlets of the OWS media group, including their websites and the collectively written book *Occupy Wall Street: The Inside Story of an Action That Changed America*, and worked with a hard drive collecting digital materials archived by the OWS archiving working group.

These materials were gathered to identify central media practices and their role for the respective movement organization in general to investigate the purpose of the employed practices, and to identify the media technologies that had a prominent place in their media work. These media technologies were considered in terms of their structuration of time and space of the work of activists and supporters of the movements.

In order to analyse the changes in spatial practices, I am following the tradition of historical sociology of events. Rather than tracing the history of one specific movement, I aim to uncover connections between crisis and critique that find expression in protest movements and their media practices promoting social change. In that sense, I follow what Sewell (2005) has termed an eventful history that considers specific events that transformed or have the potential to transform social structures significantly. Large-scale economic crises and their consequences have this potential for structural changes. The protest movements become in that sense entry points to trace these structural changes. This diachronic comparative approach allows me to disentangle connections between media-related conditions to express critique and large-scale economic crises for social change. Drawing on Sewell’s (2005) outline of an eventful temporality, I consider history as being characterized by often contingent events following each other. In this conception events have the potential to accelerate historical
developments and transform social relations. In this view, change can only be understood by considering previous events that have led to later occurrences. Sewell is in that context very cautious to point out that an eventful consideration of temporality assumes that events are temporally heterogeneous and not uniform. Hence, structures that emerge from particular events are transformations of previous structures.

The consideration of eventful temporality is helpful here to trace changes in the production of space over time. In the analysis I focus on three major events for each of my case studies to identify the potentially changing role of spatial practices. The first event is the International Unemployment Day that the Communist Party declared and mobilized for on March 6, 1930. This International Unemployment Day culminated in numerous protest marches in many larger US-American cities. The second event is the Housing Crimes Trial organized by the Metropolitan Housing Council in New York on December 6, 1970. The third event is the OWS March on Brooklyn Bridge on October 1, 2011 which resulted in the arrest of around seven hundred protesters.

The analysis focuses on specific, formative events for the protest movements of interest here while considering them in their broader context. It is not the aim to isolate single events, but to identify turning points in the development of the movements and how spatial practices are played out during those events.

The OWS movement emerged in the aftermath of the so-called Great Recession in 2008, criticizing enhanced financial capitalism (Foster and McChesney 2012). In July 2011, AdBusters, the notorious facilitator of anticonsumerism campaigns, launched a call to occupy Wall Street by introducing the hashtag #occupywallstreet on Twitter. After online mobilization, New York–based activists followed the call on 17 September 2011. Since Wall
Street was strongly secured by police forces, the occupiers turned to the close-by Zuccotti Park (Bray 2013). The small, privately owned square became the place for camping, campaigning and deliberating for the upcoming weeks until the first eviction in November 2011 (Graeber 2013). Initially there was only a handful of activists. The numbers grew quickly, however, and the encampment developed into a diverse group of occupiers being based on what has been characterized as leaderlessness and nonviolence (Bolton et al. 2013). At the same time, there was a ‘division over conventional politics, over reform and revolution’ (Gitlin 2012, XV). Although describing themselves as representing a variety of demands, the OWS movement could in general be characterized as a critique of accelerated financial capitalism and the growing inequalities in US society.

The Occupy encampment was initially set up on September 17, 2011. Besides building up an infrastructure that accommodated the everyday needs of the occupiers such as a kitchen tent, a donation tent, a library tent, a medic tent and so on, the activists organized numerous direct actions moving out of the encampment into the streets of New York. One of these events was the March on Brooklyn Bridge on 1 October. Together with a previous incident of three female protesters being maced by the police, the Brooklyn Bridge March marked a turning point for OWS in terms of support and the growing number of people joining the camp and protests organized by OWS.

The march itself remained rather quiet until the activists reached the entrance of Brooklyn Bridge. While some marchers took the pedestrian part, others streamed onto the roadway heading towards Brooklyn, seemingly with the consent of the police. After a few meters however, police officers stopped the marching group on the roadway and blocked the way back. Around seven hundred protesters were entrapped on the Bridge, while their coprotesters live-streamed their arrests with their mobile phones. Live streaming was not only a central feature during protest actions. Early on, the Media Working Group set up a twenty-
four-hours live stream from the camp, with programming elements including scheduled
interviews with occupiers and passersby, talks, music sessions and so on.

The day after the march, the *New York Times* referred to the unscripted nature of OWS
that led to the mass arrests. ‘Marchers make on-the-spot alterations in their routes, and
Saturday was a prime example: the march across the Brooklyn Bridge seemed as though it
would be confined to the pedestrian walkway until a smaller group of protesters decided to
march across the roadway, leading to hundreds of arrests’ (Baker, Moynihan and Maslin Nir
2011).

The combination of immediate spreading of information and images from the bridge
and the police brutality were for Ady—one of my informants—the reason why the support for
OWS grew exponentially after the incident.

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The media team or whoever it was got the word out and I have no idea why that
protest at that moment, but that story made it. It was after a normal protest, smaller
one. And it was different because it was growing; normally protests start big and then
get smaller, but this one was growing. And after that it went from huge to mega huge.
That was a changing point. Because the cops were doing that and then there was the
response. My friends still, they wanted to thank the police, one of my buddies was
involved in it. And he was like, we organize shit, but if it wasn’t for the cops, it
probably wasn’t as good as it was. (Ady)
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<indent>Ady and other activists I have interviewed repeatedly referred to the media savviness
of the media and press working group and their central role for the increasing support and
growth of the movement as mainstream media first blacked out and later often mitigated the
movement as uncoordinated and ineffective. The lacking and biased reporting might have its
root in the free-press zones in which journalists were placed by the police as Gillham, Edwards and Noakes (2013) argue. Although through the spatial practices of taking Zuccotti Park and claiming Brooklyn Bridge, the activists also aimed to carve out discursive spaces for the movement. As part of this aim, occupiers were able to reveal police tactics and brutality that were constitutive for the struggle about space. The immediate and real-time reporting from events—such as the Brooklyn Bridge March—allowed for the recruitment of supporters over vast distances.

Considering the two earlier movements of the Unemployed Workers in the 1930s and of the Tenants in the 1970s, it becomes clear that there are crucial changes concerning spatial practices in relation to media practices. In the 1930s, the main media for organizing the unemployed were printed outlets such as leaflets and shop papers. Brochures and pamphlets were mainly reproduced with the help of low-cost printing machines, so-called mimeographs, and included not only information about the protest activities but also about relief programs, the structure and contact details of unemployed councils as well as block committees. Besides sharing information as resource, the outlets also gathered experiences of unemployment, poverty and precarity contributing to a collective experience rather than leaving the unemployed to suffer alone. The production of bulletins and shop papers was self-organized by workers. Harold Lasswell and Dorothy Blumenstock remark in their study that ‘the shop unit was usually responsible for gathering the material, and a special shop-paper committee was usually formed in the unit’ (Lasswell and Blumenstock 1939, 60). The protest practices of the unemployed can be understood as spatial practices in Lefebvre’s sense in two ways. First, the mobilization evolved around the workers’ daily, very close spatial reference points, namely the neighbourhoods. With the help of mechanically reproduced printed outlets, organizers and activists aimed to transform the individuals sharing the physical infrastructure of their houses into a community sharing experiences of unemployment and precariousness.
Second, gathered for marches the protesters were often considered as mobs having the potential to disrupt the everyday stream of practices in the city, for example, traffic, production and consumption. Hence, the spatial practice of the protesters claiming the streets of the city was identified as dangerous and was met by the extensive police force. A march of thirty-five thousand unemployed workers in New York City on the National of Unemployment Day on 6 March 1930 ended with two dead demonstrators and several hundred being injured after the police tried to disperse ‘the violent mob’ as they were described by the *New York Times* the next day (*New York Times* 1930).

While the tenants’ movement in the 1970s followed similar, very local organizing principles as the unemployed workers movement, they operated in a very different media ecology; a media ecology that was far more complex, including not only mainstream newspapers and the radio, but also a growing number of television channels. In that context, central organizations such as the Metropolitan Council on Housing orchestrated larger and more creative events such as the housing crimes trial in 1970. They prepared and staged the event together with numerous organization emphasizing the spectacle and performance aspects of protest in order to attract media coverage and intercept in the perpetual flow of television programming (Williams 1974). At the same time, this and similar events created a platform to exchange shared experiences among activists, organizers and tenants. In order to extend the sense of shared experiences, media coverage by mainstream media was of utmost importance and as part of the preparations of direct actions, the organizers reached out to newspapers, radio and television channels and invited journalists to participate. Often the events were audio recorded and in the case of the housing crimes trial, a student team was working on a documentary. This event was particularly successful not only in attracting between one thousand and two thousand attendees, but also in generating press coverage in bigger and smaller outlets. The major objective of the housing crimes trial was a negotiation
of the right to space and to challenge those having the power over urban housing and public spaces. As part of the attempt, the organizers on the one hand approached and frequented the media and forums that are of concern for the power holders, for example, mainstream news media such as the *New York Times*. On the other hand, community media—Jane Benedict ran a monthly radio show with a local radio channel and the *Tenants' Voice* paper—became a locus for internal identification and solidarity among diverse minority groups all being affected by the housing crisis.

*From Space Bias to Hyper-Space Bias*

In contrasting OWS to two previous important events in the context of crisis, it becomes apparent that the repertoires of spatial practices, contentious action and media practices are integrated with each other. All three movement activists are employing rather taken-for-granted, established media technologies to externally and internally communicate their causes. Taking OWS as an example, I argue that the major media technologies employed were well-established infrastructures such as Facebook and Twitter. OWS activists had no major interest to establish alternative channels. There were attempts for OWS social networking platforms—global square and occupii—which however never really took off (Fuchs 2014). Instead, activists worked predominantly with *banal* media technology for organizational and mobilization purposes. At the same time, they were demystifying taken-for-granted media channels, providing workshops and best-practice advice. The Press and Media working group of OWS was staffed with well-trained, media-savvy personnel that aimed to carve out space within established media.

In terms of the production of space, the movements share that the media employed are characterized by a space bias while remaining ephemeral in terms of their durability. The Canadian economist and media theorist Harold Innis considers both time and space as central configurations of civilizations and suggests that premodern societies were characterized by a
time bias, while modern societies were obsessed with space, that is, the expansion over large territories (Innis 2007/1950). In that context, he distinguishes between media technologies that emphasize time and those that emphasize space (Paine 1992):

Media that emphasize time are those that are durable in character, such as parchment, clay and stone (. . .) Media that emphasize space are apt to be less durable and light in character, such as papyrus and paper. The latter are suited to wide areas in administration and trade. (Innis 2007/1950, 26)

Hence, changes in media technologies have consequences for communities and democracy. According to Innis, media technologies alter ‘the structure of interest (the things thought about) by changing the character of symbols (the things thought with), and by changing the nature of community (the arena in which thought developed)’ (Carey 1989, 180).

Although the movements’ media practices share a spatial bias, there is an extension or acceleration of the bias discernable since the 1930s. While the unemployed workers movement mobilized for direct action based on a neat infrastructure of local Unemployed Councils and Block Committees, a broad citywide coalition organized the Mock Housing Crimes Trial in 1970, the Occupy Wall Street Movement extended this spatial net even further, attracting activists and occupiers from all over the country and connecting to encampments throughout the United States and globally. The global connectedness in real time could be understood as a further extension of the spatial bias that Innis identified for modern societies towards a hyper-space bias. Hyper-space biased communication does not only emphasize connections over space, but also questions the boundaries and constitution of space as such, suggests André Jansson (2007). Social media are crucial for OWS in this
context, making it possible to connect over vast distances. At the same time, the very local
occupation of a physical room seemed to have been the most effective protest strategy of
activists. OWS was characterized by the need to express resistance against the current
ideology of hyper-spatial bias and the end of geography fostered by among others social
media. This need to occupy a physical space as resistance is reflected in the difficulties of
sustaining the movement after the eviction in November 2011. This spatial or hyper-spatial
bias is closely linked to the temporal organization of the movement as is argued in the
following.

Media technologies such as mimeographs (copy machines) and the television helped
both the unemployed workers movement and the tenants’ movement to speed up the
production, distribution and consumption process of information. However, the activists
engaging with diverse media practices still faced a time lag in the circulation of messages
from production to consumption. In contrast, social media—successfully employed by
OWS—are collapsing production and consumption into one immediate experience. Without
any circulation time, activists and supporters potentially engage with messages in real time.
Connected to temporal changes through media technologies, spatial practices are potentially
altered. While modern media were connecting different places over vast distances and in
Innis’ terms embraced a space bias, social media contribute to what Jansson has called hyper-
space bias in which space loses its character as a reliable variable. The hyper-space biased
ideology is closely connected to the ideology of globalization and reflects a changing
emphasis moving from limitless progress of modernity to limitless communication of post- or
late modernity (Mattelart 1996/2000).
<a>From Mechanical Speed to Digital Immediacy</a>

Besides a shift from space to hyper-space bias, there is a change from mechanical speed to
digital immediacy. In the 1930s, spatial and media practices were linked to mechanical speed
that was still effortful. Reproducing the printed materials to organize the unemployed was executed with the help of mimeographs. The employment of machines to reproduce brochures, pamphlets and shop papers help to speed up the process and consequently it was possible to reach out to more people. In the first version of his famous essay on the work of art, Walter Benjamin quotes Paul Valery in order to describe the process of reproduction in the era of mechanical speed:

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Just as water, gas, and electricity are brought into our houses from far off to satisfy our need in response to a minimal effort, so we shall be supplied with visual or auditory images, which will appear and disappear at a simple movement of the hand hardly more than a sign. (Valery 1934/1964, 225)

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<indent>For Benjamin, the reproducibility encompassed that media images no longer had a unique place in time, which coincided with its increased mobility. Benjamin 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, 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 writes:</indent>

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If the natural utilization of production forces is impeded by the property system, the increase in technical means, in speed, in the sources of energy will press for an unnatural use. This is found in war, and the destruction caused by war furnishes proof that society was not mature enough to make technology its organ ( . . .) (Benjamin 1936/2008, 42)

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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 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 of sequence as programming to sequence as flow. Referring to flow, he aims to capture the integration of previously separate segments, for example, 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 of the twenty-four-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 items.

Current discussions of digital culture emphasize the increasing speed and immediate character of digitally enabled communication especially through social media (Tomlinson 2007; Bolter 2000; Bolter and Grusin 2000). During the industrial era, speed was mainly associated with social progress (Benjamin 1936/2008). With the postindustrial era, the acceleration of speed is increasingly dictated by global capital and culture that is facilitated by means of communication. Tomlinson argues, hence, that we are witnessing a development from effortful speed to effortless, immediate delivery. In extension, Vincent Manzerolle refers to ubiquitous computing as ‘tending towards real-time, networked communication and a
collapsing of spatial distance, with a tendency of contemporary media to accelerate the circulation of information’ (Manzerolle 2014, 211), which leads to the contemporary condition of immediacy. Social media that are largely based on user-generated content are contributing to a collapse of and blurring of boundaries between production and consumption, which contributes to accelerating the circulation towards immediacy and real-time (Manovich 2009). Hence, social media are expressions of the condition of immediacy, particularly as they emphasize newness and presentness (Kaun and Stiernstedt 2014).

In their spatial practices, Occupy activist clearly established the encampment and direct actions as protest spaces against the everyday, speedy flow of the neoliberal city. Out of necessity their media practices are, however, relying on communication technologies following a hyper-spatial bias potentially questioning the constitution of space as such. The social media infrastructures employed however are based on the acceleration of message exchanges towards immediacy, while the participatory practices of decision making by Occupy Wall Street require time for deliberation and critique. Consequently their media practices came to stand in a stark contrast to the attempt of challenging the hegemonic order by ‘making it slow’, namely relying on decision making processes following the principles of participatory democracy that need time (Polletta 2002). The OWS General Assembly and the Spokescouncil became emblematic for the slowness of participatory practices giving all attendees the right to speak, but also block decisions. Break-out-sessions figured as a way to reach consensus in case suggestions were not supported by all or blocked. The character of the GA changed over time with new participants arriving all the time. Consequently, not only organizing the everyday life in the camp, but also and in particular developing a structure for decision making was an effortful and time-consuming process. Mark Bray describes the shifting roles of the GA and spokescouncil as follows:
The hope was that the GA could return to being an outward-facing tool for recruitment and larger political decisions and discussions while the more tedious issues that bored new people could be moved to the spokescouncil (Bray 2013, 89).

Reaching decisions through the slow process of participatory practices namely tedious discussions and planning has been a central feature of OWS, even though the organizing was never complete non-hierarchical and all-inclusive (Bray 2013). Social media that are based on principles of immediacy, presentness and newness contribute potentially to a desynchronization between time of media practices and political time of participatory practices (Rosa 2013, Kaun and Stiernstedt 2014). Hartmut Rosa (2013, 2003) argues that desynchronization between political practices (slow politics) and other societal spheres—especially the economic system (fast capitalism)—is a symptom of general social acceleration of late modernity. Consequently, technological infrastructures such as social media that are so vividly used by activists need to be repoliticized not only in terms of the content exchanged, but also in terms of the principles that steer the platforms.

<Conclusion>
This chapter traces the changes of how protest movement are producing space in relation to their practices involving media technologies. In that context, deterritorialization, the dispossession of urban space and shifts in the location of power are current dominant developments. Consequently citizens—individually and collectively—are increasingly dispossessed in terms of time and space. Almost every waking hour is dedicated either to production (labour) or consumption (Crary 2013). At the same time, common public spaces in a physical sense are disappearing (Nemeth and Hollander 2010), since they are increasingly turned into commercial, corporate spaces dedicated to consumption or production. Media technologies are an important part of these changes as they are constitutive of a particularly mode of production in capitalist societies that are based on knowledge and information.
Protest movements such as OWS are actively challenging this dominant logic of spatial and temporal dispossession, while operating in the very regime of capitalist production. Hence, they partly adopt logics of communicative capitalism particularly visible in their media practices (Dean 2008). This leads to unresolvable tensions between the time-consuming practices of participatory democracy and media practices that are immediate and ephemeral. The chapter aimed to identify these tensions that particularly social media produce in the context of protest movements, while contextualizing them historically. In general, two major shifts have been identified. First, I have identified a shift from space bias to a hyper-space bias. The ideological impetus that space is annihilated as a category as such by social media is questioned through the spatial practices of occupying Wall Street as the most radical form of resistance. Hence being in the square 24/7 provides a powerful counter picture to the flow of social media that was often characterized as spaceless. The ideology of annihilation of space is based on new temporalities and acceleration in the production, distribution and consumption of content through social media (Virilio 1986). These changes constitute a second shift since the 1930s from mechanical speed to digital immediacy. Negotiating the relationship between resistance and adaptation, protest movements face challenges beyond the discussion of reform versus revolution in highly mediatized societies. Beyond decisions on media tactics, protest movements need to develop long-term strategies about how to relate to social media that are constitutive of communicative capitalism. In that sense media technologies and infrastructures need to be (re)politicized.

Note

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<notes>

1 Articles about the trial appeared, for example, in the *Daily Worker*, the *Village Voice*, the *New York Times*, *New Yorker*, the *Guardian*, *Columbia Spectator*, *Columbia Owl* and the *Unionist*.

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