


MEDIUM AS MOVEMENT

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*CULTIVATING
THE ROLE OF SOCIAL
MEDIA IN CIVIL
PROTEST*

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I | Aim

Highlighting the role social media technologies have played in contemporary protest movements, this piece offers a proposal on where the role can be cultivated from here. With an eye toward how the "Arab Spring" and "Occupy" protests have unfolded, I paint a narrative of social media's successes/shortcomings in enabling these protest movements to promote democratic practice and effective social change. By keeping these measures of democratic practice and effective social change in mind, my proposal emerges as one pushing for the communal use/broadcast of live streaming and Voice over IP in, and across, physical spaces of protest.

More than simply participating in the broadcast of these technologies from our computers or phones, this available tactic suggests we make visible to the rest of our community the active protests of other communities by "broadcast demonstrations" from large screens held in spaces such as downtown parks and recreation areas. The hope is for maximized attention of bystanders, cross-local coordination between communities, and visible, mutual accountability between police authorities and protestors in action.

II | Painting a Narrative

Civil Protest as a Democratic Practice and Catalyst for Social Change [Defining Sharable Values]

To begin exploring the role social media has played thus far in contemporary civil protests, I acknowledge certain definitions used throughout as being rooted in what I find to be our common-sense, everyday use of terms. This approach is open to and encouraging of critique, but I do so in contrast to lengthy justifications of definitions as the piece overall is intended to stimulate our imaginations more than possess our attention-spans for longer than is appropriate to express my proposal. That being said, I start then by expressing “civil protest” here and throughout this piece as a practice of democracy. Synonymizing the term with commonly-used terms such as “civil resistance” and “nonviolent resistance,” civil protest implies action taken by citizens that demonstrates disapproval of, or unwillingness to tolerate, perceived-oppression in the form of political authorities, policies, or events. It also implies action executed through means that are physically, psychologically, and ecologically nonviolent.

Expressing “democracy” here as more than simply a form of government, I echo the vision of 20th-century philosopher and educational reformer John Dewey in defining it as a *way of life* centered on the practice of embodying values of liberty, equality, and fraternity, and the voluntary participation sustaining them.¹ The form of government able to call itself a “democracy,” then, becomes the one facilitating and protecting this way of life and embodied practice; or, as Dewey put it, this “mode of associated living, of conjoint, communicated experience.”²

These practicable values of liberty, equality, and fraternity, and the voluntary participation sustaining them, are affirmed through the act of protest as worth promoting and preserving by the various methods protest employs. Though promoting and preserving the

¹ John Dewey, *The Essential Dewey: Volume 1* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 75.

² John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York, NY: Touchstone Publishing, 1997), p. 87.

democratic way of life does not always require street demonstrations, sit-ins, marches, strikes, or any other method of civil protest, these methods remain ever-available options for promoting and preserving this practice if or when its corresponding values are threatened or oppressed. Given these definitions of civil protest and democracy, I turn now to painting a narrative of how social media has been used in the emergence of the “Arab Spring” and “Occupy” movements in ways that succeeded and failed in equally promoting democratic practice and social change.

Use of Social Media in “Arab Spring” Protests [Cross-Local Participation]

Standing outside his governor’s office on December 17, 2010, twenty-six-year-old Mohamed Bouazizi shouted out to those authorities in the Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzi he demanded recognition from. — “How do you expect me to make a living?” — Dousing himself in paint thinner and lighting a match that would end his life in flame, Bouazizi’s act, though one of self-violence, was to become the catalyzing event for a vastly peaceful revolt in Tunisia. Around Tunisia, many citizens reacted to news of government crackdowns following his self-immolation with a heightened sense of empowerment to protest against what they had been experiencing as injustices by their government.³ From high unemployment to government corruption and repressions of free speech, a critical mass of Tunisia’s citizens, mostly youth and liberal activists, took to the streets in the form of nonviolent demonstrations and general strikes to bring about democracy-directed reform of their nation’s power structure. In a month’s time, their longtime president, Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, was overthrown, leading to dissolution of his administration and an election held for a Constituent Assembly by October 2011, Tunisia’s first free election since independence in 1956.⁴

The speed which Ben Ali’s government was overthrown, while rooted in growing intolerance of government oppression and economic inequality, was made possible through its

³ Alex Howard, “A Tunisian on the role of social media in the revolution in Tunisia,” *GovFresh* (January 30, 2011, accessed November 27, 2012), <http://gov20.govfresh.com/a-tunisian-on-the-role-of-social-media-in-the-revolution-in-tunisia>.

⁴ Tarek Amara, “Tunisia election delayed until October 23,” *Reuters* (June 8, 2011, accessed November 27, 2012), <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/06/08/us-tunisia-election-idUSTRE7571R020110608>.

citizens' use of online social media technologies. Using blogging site Twitter, citizens across Sidi Bouzi proliferated text-based stories of police crackdowns in response to local protests following Bouazizi's self-immolation as a way to draw awareness to government oppression. Connecting citizens with shared sentiments across public spaces, others throughout Tunisia joined in face-to-face protests around the nation. When protests began spreading to more affluent cities such as Sfax and Tunis, use of Facebook as an active network allowed these citizens to not only exchange text-based accounts of violent government crackdowns, but images and video of what was actually happening on the ground. Utilized alongside blogging site Posterous and YouTube, citizens otherwise unable to engage in face-to-face participation with one another across local communities were discussing and collaborating online over how they wanted their future government to operate going forward. As a more immersive medium than television or radio, when identifying "social media" as its own medium, citizens found themselves a tool that could facilitate organization of the critical mass of citizens necessary for their attempt for effective social change through administrative overthrow.

This online participation and instantaneous sharing of stories through text, image, and video, again, was not the impetus of the uprising in Tunisia, but an indispensable catalyst for facilitating and accelerating its results. With the technology of social media on hand, citizens across a variety of local/public spaces could discuss, debate, organize, and hold their government and fellow citizens accountable. Returning to the vision shared by Dewey of democracy as a way of life to be continually cultivated, and never attained once-and-for-all, the citizens of Tunisia can be seen as promoting the associated values of liberty, equality, and fraternity, and voluntary participation sustaining them. Such a level of engagement, of citizens organizing and coordinating civil protest across various public spaces in *real-time*, has been unprecedented in history. Even in mass protests like those resulting in the French and American revolutions, available communication technologies could not enable them to organize and coordinate *immediately/instantaneously* with those in other towns about why, how, and where to protest. The results in these cases had been many citizens who wanted an

equal say in how civil protest was to be conducted missing their opportunity to provide input during the crucial time that their input mattered most.

This cultivation of democratic practice and effective social change taking place through the emerging role of social media was not a breakthrough lost on the rest of the world. With texts, images, and videos of the successful protests in Tunisia proliferating instantaneously through social media platforms, citizens of Egypt, empowered by those in Tunisia, quickly organized and coordinated their own mass protests through such proliferating. Also protesting for a more democratic way of life, youth and liberal activists in Egypt adopted the Tunisian strategy of exchanging information online about what was actually happening on the ground in cities such as Cairo and Alexandria as the uprising unfolded. Included in this was informing fellow citizens about any looting or vandalism taking place, adjusting protest tactics in response to police maneuvering, and dispelling any rumors circulated by their government through television, radio, or print media. Since their government had not fully appropriated social media to the same degree in their own functions yet, this was a fruitful avenue for protestors to communicate outside of the reach of state censorship on television and radio.

By January 25, 2011, five days after overthrow of the longtime Tunisian president, a “Day of Revolt” was organized in Egypt with a series of street demonstrations, marches, and various other acts of nonviolent resistance. Larger and larger protests followed this “Day of Revolt,” and by the peak of their mass protests and demand for President Hosni Mubarak to step down, reports estimated tens of thousands of involved citizens in Cairo’s Tahrir Square alone.⁵ While reports of violence on behalf of some protesters were reported, the protests were far and wide peaceful in nature. Resulting from this was the stepping down of Mubarak as president in February 2011 and the beginning of the process to implement freer and fairer elections, in which Egyptians could have more of a voice in choosing their representatives. Where things have gone since then shall be acknowledged in this piece later on. Anyone who

⁵ Colin Delany, “How Social Media Accelerated Tunisia’s Revolution: An Inside View,” *E.Politics* (February 10, 2011, accessed November 27, 2012), <http://www.epolitics.com/2011/02/10/how-social-media-accelerated-tunisia-revolution-an-inside-view/>.

has followed the developments of their revolt up to the present day, even minimally, however, knows that their hopes for a more democratic form of government have met serious hurdles.

Becoming labeled internationally as the “Arab Spring” movement, this wave of revolt spread to other nations in the Middle East within weeks. With more and more citizen involvement taking place through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and various blogs in the region and beyond, more and more face-to-face participation was the effect. Civil protests were staged across public spaces in Libya in February of this same year and across public spaces in Syria the following month. Results of the protests in Libya and Syria, however, have taken drastically different directions than those in Tunisia and Egypt since. Far from ending peacefully, or “democratically” for that matter, citizens of both nations have experienced widespread violence between themselves and their governments and, ultimately, civil wars. While the reasons for this happening are far from consensus, I want to argue later in this section that the growing antagonism/imbalance between online participation and face-to-face participation can be seen as one factor allowing such violence to develop unchecked.

Alongside protests for democratic reform in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria, citizens organized and coordinated protests across public spaces in Yemen, Bahrain, Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Sudan, Lebanon, Mauritania, and several others. Overthrow of the government in Yemen ensued, with the others having widely-varied results. By summer of 2011, empowered by the momentum they were witnessing online and on television, Greece and Spain amped up their own civil protest efforts, declaring what many involved called their “Indignant” movements.⁶

⁶ Alessandra Rizzo and Meera Selva, “‘Indignant’ protests spread across Europe,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (October 16, 2011, accessed December 1, 2012), <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2011/10/15/MNEV1LI745.DTL>.

Use of Social Media in “Occupy” Protests [Cross-Local Participation]

As September of 2011 hit, this wave of online-facilitated, nonviolent protests had finally hit the United States. Through thousands organizing online and in the streets of New York City to initiate what they called “Occupy Wall Street,” these mass occupation-styled demonstrations spread by October 2011 to over 600 public spaces in the U.S. and several other nations around the world, including the U.K., Canada, Ireland, France, Germany, Turkey, Australia, and South Africa.⁷ Though no specific goals were demanded, common consensus among participants included opposition to economic inequality and corporate influence in politics, as well as the need for increased civic dialogue. Summing up its association with “Arab Spring” protests, organizers of the initial “Occupy Wall Street” protests in New York’s Zuccotti Park proclaimed on their occupywallst.org website:

“Like our brothers and sisters in Egypt, Greece, Spain, and Iceland, we plan to use the revolutionary Arab Spring tactic of mass occupation to restore democracy in America. We also encourage the use of nonviolence to achieve our ends and maximize the safety of all participants.”⁸

Proliferating stories of their early successes in assembling mass participation and protest in public spaces, use of Facebook and Twitter connected engaged citizens across cities and nations. An international day of action was coordinated on October 15, 2011, receiving attention through both more-interactive and more-passive media technologies such as television and newspaper. By December of this same year, however, government authorities cleared out most of their major encampments in the U.S. and abroad, with the last major encampments in Washington D.C. and London being cleared out by February 2012. The reasons given by these authorities were mainly public safety/health concerns and different physical spaces of protest being claimed as private property.

⁷ Derek Thompson, “Occupy the World: The ‘99 Percent’ Movement Goes Global,” *The Atlantic* (October 15, 2011, accessed December 2, 2012), <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2011/10/occupy-the-world-the-99-percent-movement-goes-global/246757>.

⁸ “US protestors rally to occupy Wall Street,” *Al Jazeera English* (accessed December 2, 2012), <http://stream.aljazeera.com/story/us-protesters-rally-occupy-wall-street>.

Since the removal of these major encampments, the “Occupy” movement has found itself transition from primarily face-to-face protests in public spaces to primarily online dialogue taking place between citizens still wanting to participate, across communities, in the fight against what they perceive as social injustices. While face-to-face participation in the form of local general assemblies and periodic demonstrations still occur, the sizes and intensities of coordinated mass protests across localities have strongly diminished. Additionally, so have their active exposure on more-passive media such as television and newspaper. Much of this may be attributed to the fact that in nations where “Occupy”-associated protests have been present, political and economic crises haven’t been as desperate as they’ve been in many “Arab Spring”-related nations where social change was more concretely actualized following government crackdowns on encampments. However, more than political and economic crises not being desperate enough can be identified as at play in the diminishing sizes and intensities of face-to-face, cross-local gatherings.

Current Challenge

[Online Participation vs. Face-to-Face Participation]

Though online participation existing through social media technologies has facilitated democratic practice through keeping those interested in participating in “Occupy”-associated protests connected and in dialogue with each other, it has paradoxically come to challenge the movement’s attempts for any tangible change through an antagonism/imbalance developing between this element and the element of face-to-face participation it harnessed. In the case of government authorities clearing out the major encampments of “Occupy”-associated protests, participating citizens reacted with retreat to online dialogue as their primary space of participation. Following the clearing out of the last major encampments in early 2012, their disapproval of perceived social injustices such as economic inequality and corporate influence in politics continued, but their mass face-to-face protests coordinated across public spaces, and the momentum it catalyzed, did not. The balance emerging in its conception eventually tipped too much toward online participation, intentionally or not, and the result became a lack

of effective/concrete social change. — No policies or politicians had become directly abolished because of them.

This developed antagonism between the elements of online participation and face-to-face participation emerging in “Occupy”-associated protests likewise has played out in “Arab Spring”-associated protests, but with the imbalance shifting, in the opposite direction, toward an emphasis of face-to-face participation over online participation. The result has been rapid social change by way of administrative overthrow for many related nations, but a lack of democratic practice and its associated values. Focusing here specifically on Egypt, Syria, and Libya, the amount violence having erupted has garnered numbers as high as tens of thousands dying and millions fleeing as refugees.⁹ Embracing too quickly the overthrow of dictators/administrations and advancement of land citizens could physically rally in, the process of voluntarily deliberating on where their new governments were to go and respecting the liberty, equality, and fraternity of all involved took a back seat. Acknowledging this assessment of mine as a non-definitive, but informed generalization, I attribute this to lack of citizens maintaining the embodied values of non-violence and voluntary participation that got them to their positive quality of efficacy in the first place. These values could have been maintained through the element of online participation and its positive quality of stable democratic dialogue.

Clarifying and summarizing the aforementioned challenge/shortcoming of social media’s role in the discussed protest movements: inevitable imbalance and opposition between online participation and face-to-face participation has resulted in both movements becoming unable to maintain *equally* the two measures I have used in this piece to determine their successes; democratic practice and effective social change. The “Occupy” movement swayed toward emphasis of online participation over face-to-face participation, resulting in the maintaining of democratic practice, but lack of effective social change. The “Arab Spring” movement swayed toward emphasis of face-to-face participation over online participation,

⁹ “More than 120 thousand people killed in Syria,” *Syrian Observatory for Human Rights* (accessed October 30, 2013), http://syriahr.com/en/index.php?option=com_news&nid=1064&Itemid=2&task=displaynews#.UnLcUuKKK4m.

resulting in the maintaining of effective social change, but lack of democratic practice. In both cases, the challenge/shortcoming is the same: a conflict between online participation and face-to-face participation. Extending my previous acknowledgement of my assessment of the antagonism in the “Arab Spring”-associated protests as one that is a non-definitive, but informed generalization, this equally applies to my assessment of the “Occupy”-associated protests.

Both movements, facilitated through online participation via use of social media, initially struck an equal balance between how much they were using emerging communication technologies in conjunction with face-to-face momentum. This resulted, in their conceptions, in a likewise balanced measure of democratic practice and social change. Whether the inevitable paradox of social media being a useful facilitator and hurdle of these two aforementioned elements emerged through deliberate, conscious emphasis of online participation over face-to-face participation or vice versa, I can't claim either way with confidence. The scope of this section, of identifying their current challenge, remains just that: identifying it; in hopes of finding a way to innovate it accordingly.

Given this identifying of the current challenge of social media's role in contemporary protest movements, we can respond with either refusal to continue to embrace this role or with acceptance that this role must be innovated in ways that allow it to continue again to advance democratic practice and effective social change *equally*, or as balanced as possible. The proposal in this piece responds with this latter choice.

III | Cultivating a Way Forward

VoIP Interactivity and Live Streaming Across Physical Spaces of Protest [A Rough Sketch]

I believe that actively repurposing the way emerging social media technologies such as Voice over IP, or VoIP, and live video streaming are used can be a fruitful path for reconciling/balancing the opposition between online participation and face-to-face participation in civil protest. Through coordinating and broadcasting VoIP interactivity or live video streaming of civil protests across multiple communities in physical spaces of protest, public or private, these oppositional elements can be synthesized in a way that enables future protestors to more equally promote democratic practice and effective social change. While both VoIP and live streaming have precedents of use in civil protest through public conference calls between organizers in various local “Occupy” networks, they have not been used in outside spaces on large screens or projectors — coordinated in conjunction with other communities reciprocally broadcasting each other’s protests *live* for bystanders to witness. They have not been used for organization and coordination of civil protest across localities *on-the-spot* and *in-the-midst* of their citizenries — together. Doing so, I believe, preserves online participation’s positive quality of stable democratic dialogue and face-to-face participation’s positive quality of momentum-driven overthrow, while abolishing both of their respective negatives.

For clarity regarding the types of technologies I’m suggesting can be actively repurposed, examples of Voice over IP, or VoIP, are internet apps such as Skype and ooVoo and sites such as Google+ Hangouts and Spreecast. Examples of live streaming are sites such as Ustream, Livestream, and YouTube’s new “Live” service. Both of these social media technologies produce video and audio of what is being recorded in *real-time*, for users to experience recordings as they are happening. Their difference, however, lies in VoIP media enabling two-way, mutually interactive broadcasts of live events for viewers and live streaming media enabling only one-way broadcasts of live events for viewers.

Marshall McLuhan's proposed spectrum of "hot and cool" media as a measure of the level of involvement a medium engages our bodies, senses, or minds in can be used to help identify these both as currently the most participative media within the broader scope/medium of "social media." As expressed in both his 1967 and 1964 works, *The Medium is the Massage* and *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, a "hot" medium extends us in "high definition" or well-defined and detailed form, enabling *less* participation or filling-in-the-blanks by our sense faculties, whereas a "cool" medium extends us in "low definition" or less defined and detailed form.¹⁰ This enables *more* participation or filling-in-the-blanks by our sense faculties. For further context, radio, print, and photographs, among other examples, are all attended to by McLuhan in his works as "hotter" media, while telephone, speech, and television, among others, are attended to as "cooler."

Considering these two discussed technologies' functions of *live*, real-time involvement, both of them extend us into more sensory-immersive, or "cooler," environments than Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube are capable of. As far as mainstream or public-use technology stands today, Voice over IP and live streaming environments are emerging as the present media/mediums of greatest social and cultural awareness, involvement, participation, and connection. Both of these media are worthy of repurposing in civil protest in the manner I'll further elaborate on for this reason. I do believe, though, when VoIP apps/sites such as Skype, ooVoo, Google+ Hangouts, and Spreecast can become more feasibly used, this type of social media should take precedence over the one-way streams of sites such as Ustream, Livestream, and YouTube Live. With two-way, mutual interactivity enabled through VoIP use, this type of social media offers more opportunities for utility in civil protest than use of one-way live streams.

Given this background, I want to proceed to lay out my proposal of repurpose/synthesis by painting a hypothetical and imagined scenario of 1,000-10,000 citizens organized in a local space witnessing, through large video screens, 1,000-10,000 other citizens

¹⁰ Marshal McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press, Inc., 2003), p. 48.

protesting in a local space, or a variety of local spaces. They interact with each other in real-time through screens much like they can in web teleconferences used traditionally in business and recreation; through technologies, hopefully, that are more like Skype and ooVoo than the more passive and one-way-directed Ustream and Livestream live streaming sites. This is not to say that live streaming sites on such screens couldn't be useful.

Consensus methods that have already been used in local protests such as the "human microphone" and hand signals, emerging in the "Occupy" movement, could be exercised in front of these camera-equipped screens for other localities to view and interact with. This would realistically require smaller-scale consensus building to determine how this or that locality interacts with another locality in such an environment. Citizens could also join in on streams passively if they chose through mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets, or laptops. It would be most useful for these streams to be implemented and used in outside, public spaces, I remind the reader, however, as the point of "public space" in any self-proclaimed "democratic culture" is community engagement and democratic participation in the first place.

The hope/motivation for proposing this available tactic and interactive environment emerges from the possibility that communally witnessing interactive, online streaming of civil protests through VoIP or live streams may be able to influence/empower face-to-face bystanders not participating to engage in civil protest; as well as civic dialogue in outside, public spaces more generally. — Resulting in, the hope continues, protestors and bystanders witnessing in other local spaces through these interactive screens being reciprocally influenced/empowered to increase their involvement as well. — Such a tactic can include, if needed to begin implementation in the shorter term, single-day "broadcast demonstrations" that can attract and raise public awareness of such coordination. This may be able to be tested out even with low quality equipment through, for example, syncing up Skype on a smartphone or similar device to larger projectors in outside, public spaces and allowing

nearby/voluntarily-involved communities to interact live; coordinating civil protest on the spot together and witnessing simultaneous employment of the practice.

The benefits of maintaining VoIP interactivity and live streaming in physical spaces of protest *permanently*, or re-occurringly, can be further explored. If maintained permanently or re-occurringly, this synthesizing of online participation and face-to-face participation can be an ever-present outlet for visibility and accountability between citizens and their governments. The reason for this is because anyone could be able to publicly monitor government violence and citizen violence, much like the citizen-invoked violence that occurred in “Occupy Oakland” and elsewhere in 2011, within these environments. Checks and balances regarding government violence, more specifically, could be maintained through the threat of cross-local retaliation via other communities participating in the VoIP interactivity across physical spaces. Checks and balances regarding citizen violence could be maintained through participating communities in other localities visibly condemning, *live*, for anyone to witness, such action. Cultivating the role of social media in this way, then, becomes protective of democratic values, in addition to being facilitative of them. In terms of the assessed imbalance of face-to-face participation in certain “Arab Spring”-associated protests over online participation, this could prove beneficial.

But Why?

The vague and hypothetical scenarios painted in this picture I’ve been providing for the reader have aimed to illustrate how cultivation of social media use in this way can resolve the antagonism/imbalance I identify as the current challenge of its use in civil protest. As I’ve alluded to at the beginning of this section, the antagonism, I believe, can be reconciled through synthesis; synthesis of online participation and face-to-face participation in a way that enables future protestors to more *equally* promote democratic practice and effective social change. The communal use/broadcast of VoIP and live streaming in, and across, physical spaces of protest can achieve this balanced synthesis because it preserves the positive qualities of both elements, while abolishing their negative qualities.

The positive quality of online participation has been its capacity for stable democratic dialogue through visible accountability and feasible access, while its negative quality has been its capacity for allowing protestors a space to shy away from visibly demanding in the streets the tangible change of political persons and entities deemed intolerable. This visible demand stands vital for any protest aiming for a rebellion stronger than mere rhetoric. The positive quality of face-to-face participation, on the flip side, has been its capacity for physical momentum against government suppression of the intolerance inspiring protest, while its negative quality has been its capacity for allowing protestors to instigate violence without collaborating-communities being immediately aware of it during protests they've coordinated together. By exercising VoIP interactivity or live streaming on large screens across local, outside spaces, protestors can maintain online participation's capacity for visible accountability and feasible access without allowing them to shy away from visible demands in the streets for tangible change. Likewise, it can maintain face-to-face participation's capacity for physical momentum against government suppression of protest without allowing protestors to instigate violence unobserved by the communities coordinating with them cross-locally.

Summing up the proposal from this point, my hope is that the audience of this piece can see how the longer-term tactic suggested of permanent/re-occurring VoIP interactivity and live streaming, across physical spaces, stands as an available resource for further facilitating and protecting democratic practice/values. In addition, I hope my audience can see how the possible shorter-term tactic suggested in this paper of single-day "broadcast demonstrations" can be acted out as a test or pulse-checking for the public if nothing else. All in all, this entire piece and the proposal roughly sketched are ultimately intended, again, to stimulate our imaginations. Especially considering the vagueness through which it has been articulated, my only realistic hope is that it comes off to the reader as a seed to share and be harvested in whatever ways the reader may find fruitful to her or his own imagination of what tactics are possible and available within civil protest, resistance, or rebellion.

Potential Challenges

[Legality and Privacy]

Concluding this proposal sketch, I want to address that attempts by governmental authorities to prohibit VoIP interactivity and live streaming across physical spaces of protest would be something to be anticipated, understood, and defended against when unjustifiably combatted. This most likely would become an issue between citizens and governments over disputes of legality regarding public safety and property rights like those that existed during the emergence of “Occupy” and “Arab Spring”-associated protests throughout 2011. If protestors ever wanted to maintain some level of permanence or re-occurrence of the “broadcast demonstrations” touched upon, it would be appropriate to find out through relevant local, state, and federal governments what is currently within legal bounds regarding protest in spaces disputed as public or private. In issues of un-cleared ambiguity, governmental authorities currently possess the monopoly of force to remove civil protests if they so choose. While this monopoly may be open to philosophical dispute, protestors should know where the line of force stands *before* crossing it in regard to the tactic proposed. Additionally, the presence of citizens within physical spaces of protest such as downtown parks or outside commerce areas, who are not participating in this practice, should be acknowledged and probed whether they consent to being recorded or streamed.

If this method of cultivation and tactical remedy to the antagonism between online participation and face-to-face participation is to remain faithful to democratic practice and effective social change, voluntary participation must consistently be sustained. If it is to be effective in mobilizing a critical mass of citizens necessary for any successful abolition of intolerable policies or politicians, prevailing laws must be understood or made communicable to all becoming involved. VoIP interactivity or live streaming across physical spaces of protest, public or private, does not need to be concealed from governmental authorities. Quite oppositely, these roles in civil protest should be promoted. The justification and defense for their use rests with the justification and defense of civil protest as a practice of democracy and active preservation of liberty, equality, and fraternity. If governmental authorities are to

argue against their cultivated roles and use, they must argue foremost against civil protest as democratic. This is an argument that I believe places them in a contradictory and vulnerable position if they are to be promoters of a democratic form of government. This is an argument I believe can be competently defended by citizens protesting and cultivating use of social media technologies for the appropriate reasons.

Concluding Remarks

Wrapping up, I want to list some areas I feel are necessary to touch upon as inadequacies in this piece needing future address:

- Unequal attention to “Arab Spring” and “Occupy”-associated protests in every case that the successes/challenge of social media’s role within contemporary protest movements is mentioned.
- Insufficient clarification of what I mean by “effective social change.” — Though acknowledging that I have tended in this piece to frame it in a negative lens as permanent overthrow/abolition of intolerable policies and politicians — while leaving open the positive lens as democratic practice.
- Underemphasis of my assessment as a non-definitive, but informed generalization.
- Underemphasis of my proposal as an exercise of the dialectical method (of “thesis-antithesis-synthesis”).
- Not fully up-to-date in regard to latest developments of both the “Arab Spring” and “Occupy” movements.
- Insufficient acknowledgement and proof of VoIP and live stream use in contemporary protest movements prior to the present day.
- Insufficient detail of the different social media technologies used in specific situations throughout the emergence of the discussed movements.
- Mention that the proposed tactic is *not* meant to be exclusive to the “Arab Spring” or “Occupy” movements or their perceived ideologies.
- Mention that the list of “Potential Challenges” is not exhaustive and that issues of feasibility, scalability, and manageability are just as relevant.

Given these inadequacies, I acknowledge that if this proposal ever became something I felt like expanding upon, these would be the areas to pursue.

Potential Applications Beyond the Scope of Civil Protest [Artistic Initiatives]

Reflecting on how social media use may be cultivated in civil protest, I’ve come to probe VoIP interactivity and live streaming as harboring positive cultural potential beyond acts of protest. Brief examples include streaming and broadcasting collaborators, together across

multiple face-to-face spaces, performing music jamming, freestyle drawing/painting, poetry sharing, and yoga experimentation together with each other; among many possibilities. This can potentially foster extended social awareness of artistic community/events, interactive experimentation with evolving communication technologies, and production of artwork directly affected by an environment of cross-local, live/real-time viewership. Such collaborativity could be actualized through interactive streams on VoIP apps/sites such as Skype, ooVoo, Google+ Hangouts, or Spreecast, or through passive streams on sites such as Ustream, Livestream, or YouTube Live if the former happened to prove less feasible. I believe there is much healthy potential in experimenting with the cultivated use of these emerging social media technologies in a variety of cultural contexts and look forward to experimenting with their cultivated use in my own life.

If anyone having read this overall piece finds interest in sharing with me suggestions or unfiltered criticisms of anything presented in it, feel free to touch base with me at growveinitiative@gmail.com. I strongly encourage both and everything shared will be received with open arms.

IV | Other Works Utilized

Jason Adams, *Occupy Time: Technoculture, Immediacy, and Resistance after Occupy Wall St.* (New York, NY: Palgrave Pivot, 2013).

Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011).

Noam Chomsky, *Occupy (Occupied Media Pamphlet Series)* (Westfield, NJ: Zuccotti Park Press, 2012).

Andreas M. Kaplan and Michael Haenlein, "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media," *Indiana University* (September 3, 2009, accessed April 7, 2013), <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0007681309001232>.

Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (Berkeley, CA: Gingko Press, Inc., 2005).

Jeffrey Stout, *Blessed Are the Organized: Grassroots Democracy in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

Emily Wilcox, *An Investigation of the Intersection between Art and Activism* (Bowling Green, KY: Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects, 2009).

