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Narratives of politics and identity on Twitter

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KING'S College LONDON

The story of Occupy Wall Street: narratives of politics and identity on Twitter

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Thesis submitted for the qualification of Doctor of Philosophy

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, Eleni and Symeon, for their abiding support

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the Occupy Wall Street movement (OWS), and argues that a narrative analysis of this movement's social media stories can shed light into how contemporary social movements and their supporters endeavour to politically negotiate and present themselves to the world on Twitter. Social media narratives are important elements surrounding the discourses of social movements. However, despite the resurgent interest in the ways in which social media are used strategically by activists to organise their networks, and in the ways in which their communities use these platforms as windows to express their shared sentiments, little of these approaches focus on the narratives constructed on social media networks, or on the stories told by users of social media networks in response to social movements. Instead, quantitative analysis, sentiment analysis, organisation analysis, and network analysis have governed social movement studies of Twitter, focusing on metric aspects of movements and their organisation. Moving beyond these frameworks, this thesis deploys the original analytical framework of Network Thematic Analysis (NTA) as a six-step analytical process, in order to look into the elements—stories, micro-narratives, and narratives—constructing the big story of OWS on Twitter. Network analysis of Twitter communication unveils the dynamics of the stories told about OWS, and reveals the dominant narratives of the movement's story on Twitter. This thesis advances our knowledge about OWS' political and identity narratives, stimulates new discussions about social media's role in contemporary social movements, and provides a springboard for new analyses of social movements.

List of abbreviations and acronyms

MSM	Mainstream media
NTA	Network Thematic Analysis
NSM	New Social Movements
NYPD	New York Police Department
OWS	Occupy Wall Street

PART I: THE RESEARCH FOUNDATIONS

1. Introduction

> Social media amplified small voices and brought them to the ears of the populists and to the ears of the people in power. And *they* are forced to listen to us. And if they don't listen to us, we will just keep on drowning them out, until we revolt. They have to listen to us *eventually*. They can't ignore all of us. They can't kill all of us. They can't keep us quiet any more.
>
> John, 27, OWS protester/student

Social movements are governed by stories and storytelling. Narrative forms the centre of the social and cultural processes on which contemporary social movements are dependant and through which they are developed. Such narrative forms are inclusive of frames, political interpretations, movement culture, public discourse, and collective identity. The exploration of social media narratives in contemporary social movements is both justified and long overdue. This thesis is cautious of technological determinism, and discusses certain social media practices that the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement took advantage of, as well as the role of its community within wider debates around social movements, politics, and digital culture. Hence, this thesis focuses on answering the following question: *How does a movement express its story through interwoven narratives on Twitter, and what does the expression of these stories and the responses of participants, activists and adversaries to key events tell us about the movement?*

Bringing together theoretical analysis and an empirical study of OWS, I argue that social media narratives are important elements of the movement's discourses, and offer a critical analytical concept for analysing contemporary

social movements in general. I go on to show that by investigating narratives, their processes, and the circumstances under which they rise, we can account for this new means of studying social movements. Furthermore, in this thesis I propose analytical views that are *based on* and *enhance* new social movement theories. The investigation of social media narratives, micro-narratives, and stories, as this thesis demonstrates, avoids the major problems of framing analyses and underlines important characteristics of meaning-making and identity-formation in OWS (Chapter 8). This thesis also reveals other dynamics in contemporary social movements, such as reactions to mainstream media reports (Chapter 5), Twitter abuse against the movement (Chapter 6), and narratives against police violence (Chapter 7), and traces the smaller parts of social movement's constructive elements that are given little attention in current social movement scholarship.

Indeed, one of the most valuable outcomes of the shift in social movement research has been the turn to the internal stories of social movements (Davis, 2000a; Fine, 1995; Richardson, 1990; Griffin, 1993). The investigation of these stories told by their members has offered insights into a number of characteristics that may construct a movement, such as: the ways in which collective culture is structured, a movement's cohesiveness is created, meanings are shared, and sentiments influence the narratives of the movement. This advancement has been seemingly part of the revived importance of the social movement research field in context, its impact on human experience, and on the significance of communication in the construction of meaning and of identity.

In recent years, we have witnessed an even wider change of focus in social movement research, which has demonstrated an increasing attention to social media as important tools for investigating and tracing contemporary social movements. Yet, despite the resurgent interest in the ways in which social media are used strategically by activists to organise their network, and in the ways in which their communities use these platforms as windows to

express their shared sentiments (Papacharissi, 2015; Chadwick, 2013; Polletta, 2009, 2006), little of these approaches focus on the narratives constructed on social media networks or on the stories told by users of social media networks in response to social movements. Instead, quantitative analysis, sentiment analysis, organisation analysis, and network analysis have governed social movement studies of platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. These have focused on the metric aspects of movements, such as the number of users engaging with movements, and the ties between them and their networks. They have also pointed to indicators of the influence members of these communities have and their role in the social media environment of the movement. At the same time, communication and media scholars have focused on the ways in which these movements organise and communicate online. For many scholars, the interdisciplinary potential of *networked communities* works towards the implementation of what they call "*digital democracy"* (Hacker and van Dijk, 2000; Dahlgren, 2009;), thus posing questions regarding the reconceptualization of models and paradigms within political systems, and the potential of digital democracy models which combine hybrid structures instead of binary concepts. For instance, digital versus real, offline versus online, rationality versus emotion, or individuals versus groups. In the meantime, key concepts such as *participatory culture* (Jenkins, 2006) and *digital citizens* (Dahlgren, 2009; Isin and Ruppert, 2015) illustrate the need to move beyond fixed notions, in pursuit of the emerging routines and rhetorics afforded by social media networks.

While all the aforementioned research is an important basis for the research of social media-immersed movements, what remains to be researched in more detail is the content of that communication: the meanings social movements' communication form within social media platforms. I argue that a narrative analysis of these social media stories can shed light on how movements and their supporters endeavour to negotiate and present themselves to the world on platforms such as Twitter. Studying storytelling in social media networks can also elucidate a different set of social, political,

and cultural dynamics involved in movements and their efforts to introduce their own concepts for social change. This thesis addresses one important case of such contemporary social movements: the stories and narratives of the Occupy Wall Street movement (OWS), as constructed on Twitter during the last forty days of the movement's life on the ground.

This thesis originated out of an interest in social movements and the importance of social media stories and storytelling in their functioning. Considering the sociological roots of this thesis, its basis is shaped by the sociological discipline, but also works together with narrative theories to form a new approach to tracing OWS' social media story. With a view to offering some context, this introduction first provides a brief discussion of the ways in which social media stories and narratives form meanings for OWS, briefly introduces the original Narrative Thematic Analysis (NTA) as my analytical framework, and then points to the significance of social media storytelling for contemporary social movements.

1.1 Central Concepts in Social Media Storytelling

Scholars such as Barthes (1977), Genette (1980), and Grimes (1975) first established an investigation of narratology through structuralism, seeing text as a 'transtextual' piece of work ungoverned by the specificities of media or culture. Forming this concept in such broad terms allowed the study of texts to go beyond the literary canon, into the investigation of works that would later make a come-back in digital platforms, through forms such as letters and life-writing. Targeting casual stories instead of literary canon texts, scholars turned to narratives of personal experience (Labov, 1972), focusing on interactive social stories of specific contexts and stories that performed interpersonal and identity processes for groups. Groundbreaking work by Labov and Waletzky (1967) gave rise to research around these kinds of narratives. However, interactive narratives remained as a separate sphere from research into literary theoretical storytelling, a dichotomy that was

sustained by the works of Herman (2002), Fludernik (1996), and Toolan (2001). The development of structuralist narratology was further influenced by critical perspectives from fields such as sociology and sociolinguistics, leading to discussions about the political outgrowth of narratives and storytelling. In this context, where narrative analysis was deployed to look into political, social, and cultural processes, the seemingly neutral position of narrative systems was reinstated through critical narratology.

This move towards the adoption of narratives into fields such as sociology and anthropology highlighted the importance of storytelling's role in re-establishing the primary purpose of narrative: its ability to socially and politically help people tell their stories. This thesis, too, shows how we can adopt contemporary narratology beyond the bounds of formalism in order to investigate OWS' dynamics. Considering that discourse in social media networks is hybrid by nature, since it mixes instantaneous communication with written word, narratives on social media such as Twitter are governed by the dynamics of personal experience stories told through interactive processes. These new narratives demand an intertwining of new media theories and narrative qualities, thus launching an approach towards an interdisciplinary research that accounts for the contextual nature of these narratives, their content, and their structure.

Taking a closer look into the concepts of narrative and story which this thesis rests upon, I follow Polkinghorne's definition of narrative as 'a meaning structure that organises events and human actions into a whole, thereby attributing significance to individual actions and events according to their effect on the whole' (1988:18). In contrast, a story is just a sequence of relevant events that is put in chronological order. For those stories to gain meaning, they have to be put into a plot in order to describe how those events relate to each other. Consequently, the narrative's role is to tie the stories in such a way that while it deals with the sequence of events, it also considers the medium through which they are told, and the ways in which

these events are put together into a coherent whole. The interpretation of a narrative is hence realised through 'emplotment': individual or collective stories gain their meaning by interpreting the temporal or causal relationships of the events that construct them in relation to other events within the whole narrative, and by exposing the function each event has in the development of the whole. In order to discern and understand an event, or the parameters that made that event possible, it has to be positioned in the temporal and comparative sequence of a story; this story-sequence is based on the preceding and ensuing events being tied together chronologically. Therefore, the power, importance, and meaning of each event can only be understood after all the events are emplotted within a narrative in a temporal order (Martin, 1992:74).

In this sense, OWS' whole story on Twitter is constructed of tweets as stories, which compose the sequence of the events taking place and narratives that recompose the past, thus giving it meaning and sequence, while at the same time extending versions of what the future *may* or *should* hold. In this thesis I take these two concepts—narrative and stories—a step further. I propose that social media narratives are emplotted through micro-narratives, which are formed through themes of stories told by users on Twitter. In order to look into stories, micro-narratives, and narratives, I introduce the analytical framework of Network Thematic Analysis (NTA) as a six-step analytical process. NTA begins by conducting and analysing interview data, indexing Twitter data, moving to selection, emplotment, narrativisation, and finally the visualisation of the stories, micro-narratives, and narratives. This original framework is introduced in Chapter 3 in order to tackle the issues of ephemerality and instantaneity that are present on Twitter, and also to deal with the thickness of Twitter data analysed, which exceeds 1.5 million tweets. By looking into the stories, the micro-narratives, and the narratives, this thesis seeks to unveil the dynamics of the stories told about OWS and to reveal the dominant narratives of the movement's story on Twitter.

Media theorists often approach narratology's conventional fixation with text with disbelief and wariness. Likewise, narratologists have accused media theorists of 'text blindness' (Hausken, 2004), because of their hesitation to analyse texts and their 'condescending' indifference toward definitive terminology and the textual processes of the narratives they examine. For instance, media theorists prefer to use the term 'transmedia storytelling' (Jenkins, 2006) to describe the materiality of media and the importance of a text's meaning, while narrative theorists prefer to use the term 'transmedial'. Where narratologists talk about digital narratology they talk about 'distributed narratives' (Walker, 2005; also see: Page and Thomas, 2011:7-21), while media theorists call the same texts 'cross-media texts' and the platforms that construct and convey them 'cross-media platforms'. Despite their differences, both of these fields lack the language to talk about a text that is no longer static, but is instead a dynamic entity based on processes. More importantly, some theorists entirely dismiss the possibility of narrative theory entering discussions on social media. Lev Manovich (2001:228), for example, insists that the use of narrative in media discussions is saturated and is used 'to cover up the fact that we have not yet developed a language to describe these strange new objects.' Whilst both narratologists and media theorists have acknowledged the significance of readers and audiences as participants in the co-production of texts' meaning, rather than seeing them as passive recipients of semantic content, moving from the generalisation of the concept of 'narrative' to a more precise language or comprehensive theory has yet to inform academic literature. I argue that social media storytelling can make narrative relevant again for social movements, if we turn our attention towards the micro-elements that construct social movements on social media and consequently examine the social, cultural, and technological elements of the stories forming them.

To comprehend meaning making in social media movement stories, the starting point of this analysis becomes their lack of an end-point. In traditional narratives, the role of the ending is to bring closure to the

sequence of events triggered by the beginning, which is the story or 'the event that originates those that follow' (Trilling, 1980:125). In a rounded-up narrative, the meaning is inherent from the events that structure the beginning to the events that give meaning to the ending. In this way, beginning, middle, and end, form links to each other in a comprehensive manner. Hence, in the conventional form of narratives, we move from the primary events through a number of conflicts and eventually reach a resolution as an end to the narrative. Yet, this orderly series is seldom applicable to social movement stories, since they are predominantly characterised by structural ambiguity (Polletta, 2006). The social media stories of social movements become even more ambiguous on platforms such as Twitter, which are widely used as and based on this speed, breadth, and ease of dissemination. As this thesis will show, the social media stories of OWS on Twitter forecast a future for the movement, but since the narratives they form are constantly in process, told and retold, stories linger on Twitter unfinished. In these narratives without an end we can trace a line of development, but we do not get a sense of closure like we do in traditional stories.

In telling the story of the movement, Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 are all of equal importance to the story of the movement, with the emphasis falling on the evaluation of key events through micro-narratives, thus granting more importance to key actions and turning points as the processes that form the movement's story. Following Hayden White's argument that 'every narrative, however, seemingly "full", is constructed on the basis of a set of events which might *have been included but were left out*' (1981: 10; emphasis in original), I focus on specific key events that form the dominant narratives of OWS on Twitter. In my view, the synergetic motifs of social media platforms may be generating a new range of typologies for social movements that are infused and invested in social media networks' usage, thus challenging earlier theories of social movement narratives. In these new typologies, the use of the micro-narrative term allows for a clearer analysis of narratives that lack

obvious endings.

The high speed with which information is spread on social media platforms such as Twitter provides us with fresh material against which to examine the structures and workings of a social movement's development. Intermittent endings or the possibility of multiple endings for key events form the meaning of OWS as a collection of narratives with their own plots and open endings. In the chapters that follow, micro-narratives and narratives come in many shapes and serve many functions. In Chapter 5, mainstream media reports on OWS are seen as facilitating an affective response on Twitter that negatively influences the narrative of the movement's causes. In the case of violence against OWS on Twitter in Chapter 6, storytelling comes under the episodic division of a narrative about violence. Thus, it demonstrates how specific events managed to form the narrative of Twitter abuse against OWS, so that the spilling of specific smearing micro-narratives into bigger narratives made the eviction of OWS from Zuccotti Park more publically acceptable. In the investigation of the stories against OWS' eviction in Chapter 7, the users' ability to endlessly update and tell the story of what was happening on the ground became a source of instantaneous storytelling that unveiled a narrative against violence that strengthened the notions of OWS as a movement for social change. And finally, Chapter 8 shows how stories on Twitter form an identity for the movement that goes beyond collective identity, towards a shared collective and multifaceted identity, which is formed through a number of identity micro-narratives. Evidently, as social media networks become core elements of social movements, what becomes clearer is the fact that we cannot conceptualise social movements through networks or social media ties alone. Rather, we should use analytical concepts such as storytelling to expose the discourses that form movements on social media.

1.2 Social Media Narratives: the dialectic of social movement theory and storytelling

Storytelling has been criticised as a 'heuristic' method of representation, which gives selective and limited sources for representing the self and collective group perceptions (Bamberg, 2004:211). This criticism is further supported by debates regarding the representation of the self in online spaces (Turkle, 1995, 2016), and the sociality of such platforms. However, the antagonistic notions surrounding storytelling and social media work to strengthen this thesis, impregnating social media storytelling with an ambiguity that challenges conventional notions of social movements and suggests that we cannot approach social movement storytelling in purely essentialist terms. As such, this thesis asks the sociological field to consider a number of ways in which contemporary social movements are constructed through narratives on social media, considering platforms such as Twitter as bridges between their online and offline representations. The impact of narratives on social movement theory has focused for the most part on the structural functions of social movements (Polletta, 1998a,b), but this thesis argues that narratives are not just a series of events; those events are told by and are about specific groups or individuals. As the study of social movements increasingly includes narrative practices, it is all the more pressing to revisit the relationship between social movements and group representation and to reconceptualise how they are adapted in the context of social media networks.

Investigating social movement storytelling as a synergetic practice on Twitter becomes a reminder of the fact that supporters of social movements, activists, and on-the-ground protesters are not abstract actors, but individuals who produce and process narratives of social movements on social media networks and on the ground. Rather than seeing Twitter's space as a cyber-utopian vortex of complete freedom from physical, social and cultural constraints, this thesis examines the importance of forming social media cultures for social movements, which can have real and gripping

results for the movements and their supporters.

1.3. The importance of OWS' interwoven Twitter narratives

OWS' interwoven narratives on Twitter are important because political action on social media matters. Perhaps people who are privileged can opt out of social media and live free from all the discussions such platforms create. Yet, even then they cannot break away from the impact of social media and their effect on social, cultural, and political life. What happens to our changing cultures and to the wider society is important to us all—and that means the relationship between social media and social movements is important too.

The interwoven narratives of OWS on Twitter more importantly suggest that social movement politics is about the varied perceptions of what a social movement actually is. OWS' Twitter narratives can show how certain issues are more significant to some people than to others, and how for some these are personal matters while for others they are a more collective issue. To comprehend the importance of contemporary social movements, one must above all understand the unavoidable societal inclination towards introspection, which emphasises one's predispositions towards the expression of one's beliefs. Social media and especially Twitter are particularly attached to this presentation of the self because they offer individuals the space to reflect on their unique set of experiences on a public platform. In this way, it becomes more difficult to pinpoint a coherent collective identity for movements such as OWS by only observing them; analysing the discourses that envelop them allows for a more all-encompassing notion of what they actually represent.

The interwoven narratives of OWS on Twitter can show that issues within the movement and its definitions of identity, politics, motives, etc., often lead to disputes from outsiders but also from within the movement. Twitter narratives can show the extent to which the responsibility and, more often

than not, distress to define who and what the movement is about can be a constant root of disagreement that is very hard to manage in social movements. The challenge every social movement faces every time it materialises concerns the decisions it needs to take around what it should fight for and therefore demand from the public, the authorities, and their supporters. OWS, in contrast to previous social movements (i.e. the 1960s student movements or the anti-globalisation movement), declined to constrain itself to specific demands. Looking into the interwoven narratives of this movement on Twitter therefore can shed light on the multifaceted character of this movement and apply what we have learned from it to future movements and future politics of social action.

Consequently, this thesis sets out to demonstrate the dimensions and plasticities of current narrative approaches to the study of social movements, and highlights the usefulness of these approaches for understanding social movements that use social media platforms. The thesis is structured in such a way that it moves from suggesting new theoretical paradigms, conceptual, and analytical frameworks for the analysis of contemporary social movements, to investigating new architectures for social movement storytelling, and culminates in analysing how narrative processes for OWS contributed to the formation of collective and hybrid narratives. In this way, it combines components from diverse theoretical traditions. Therefore, the research contributes to original conceptual frameworks for analysing contemporary social movements and extends the importance of established theoretical traditions. Adopting the innovative NTA approach, this research's analytical framework exposes several interrelated undertones and prevailing concepts within the data. This approach also challenges the problematic divisions made by social and data scientists, between theory and practice, or between social movement theoretical frameworks and the ways in which the stories of these movements are told. Rather, it asserts that these feed into each other, rather than oppose one another. Each chapter helps to generate a dialogue regarding the reciprocity of social movement theories, narrative

theories and storytelling in an era in which everyday life is saturated by social media. This thesis thus advances our knowledge about social movements and their narratives, stimulates new discussions about social media's role in contemporary social movements, and provides a springboard for new analyses of social movements.

2. Contextualising the Research Dimensions

2.1 Framing OWS as a contemporary movement

The Occupy movement has become a point of departure for discussions of 21st century social movements and, perhaps more generally, for expressing the aspirations and anxieties regarding a modernity that might be able 'to unite all mankind' (Berman, 1983:15). The name of the movement itself has entered vernacular language as a byword for social movements that occupy both physical spaces and social media network spaces. Indeed, the role of Social Media Networks (SMNs) in a number of protests incubated in New York, London, Madrid, Amsterdam, that all seemingly, and wrongly so, collapse into a single movement called 'Occupy', generated a number of debates between several scholars. They argued that social media played an integral role in creating some of the conditions for these protests, which then spread worldwide (Gerbaudo, 2012). Arguing that SMNs, such as Twitter, became tools for those involved in the Occupy movement to transmit and express their views regarding the unfairness of the ways in which our global society works (Douzinas, 2011; Castells, 2007; Schuler, 2004), this thesis generates new research hypotheses concerning what features and patterns may be seen as distinctively narrative in nature within social media and how these patterns may account for the discursive functions of contemporary social movements. Occupy's broad reception may well mark a transnational historical turning point where people stand together against a political and economic status quo, using new means of communication to *both* act against it and towards social change. The movement's powerful presence on Twitter set the platform as part of what made the realities of the movement possible, and allowed us to capture its representation online through the stories told on that platform. By evaluating Twitter's storytelling novelties in light of narrative analysis, this thesis traces Twitter's role in facilitating, transmitting, and sustaining social movement stories by focusing on one, if not the biggest Occupy movement: Occupy Wall Street (OWS).

2.1.1 Reading OWS in a digital era

By examining OWS and its relationship with Twitter, this thesis aims to discover the narratives that construct this movement on Twitter, drawing on concepts from social movement studies, social media network studies, and narrative studies. The point of this interdisciplinary approach is twofold: first to look at the ways in which OWS is affected by technological, cultural, and political schemas, and second to explore the narratives of the movement presented on Twitter through a puzzle of small stories that reconstruct the events and structure a whole story for the movement. This chapter works together with the following chapter in order to apply this two-fold approach to OWS, gradually and clearly. This chapter will therefore delve into a sociocultural analysis of OWS, while the following chapter, Chapter 3, will pore over a narrative approach to the movement. With this mindset, this thesis differs to the approach taken by previous studies on OWS, which have generally concentrated on the movement's causes, identity, and effects (see: Juris, 2012; Pickerill and Krinsky, 2012). By contrast, I aim to demonstrate not only how OWS has been represented in social media culture, but also how it has adapted the affordances of its technological context to communicate and connect its different elements through meaningful stories.

A good way to understand the features, origins and experiences that construct OWS, we need to first look more closely at its distinctive social and cultural context. Crossley (2003) conceptualises movements as social fields that dynamically reproduce themselves. Based on this, OWS can be best understood through several coordinates, as a social field that is explicitly configured by three dimensions: the complex socio-political context that the movement was placed in, the expanding ties between social media and social movements, and the affect that is prevalent in networked communities. These three dimensions will now be looked into separately and discussed in order to establish the first investigative approach to OWS: the sociocultural coordinates of the movement.

2.2 From Occupy to Occupy Wall Street: echoing the 99%

More than five years on, the legacy of OWS still remains very much part of the cultural fabric, collective self-perception, and political formation of contemporary social movements. However, before discussing the political dimensions structuring OWS, it is imperative to sketch a picture of Occupy as a series or a collection of movements that resulted from the same conditions in worldwide locations. This will also make clear the reasons why OWS was chosen as a case study of contemporary social movements that can also be traced through their social media storytelling processes, as a set of stories and narratives. This first section will therefore focus on the socio-cultural context of OWS, illustrating how OWS came into being and how it has developed into a series of Occupy movements, before moving finally into the discussion of OWS' conditions of unrest and political frames.

2.2.1 And Adbusters said, 'Let there be a protest', and there was a protest

The initial idea of occupying a space in the Manhattan area came on the 2nd of February 2011 from Adbusters, a not-for-profit Canadian-based magazine, who called for 'A Million Man March on Wall Street' through their website.[1] Five months later, Adbusters sent an email to its subscribers with the subject line: 'America needs its own Tahrir', clearly referring to the protests taking place in Egypt at the time. In the same month, June 2011, OccupyWallStreet.org was registered as a web address; a website that would later become one of Occupy's biggest online meeting points. On the 13th of July, a certain group of people took a leap of faith and organised a peaceful occupation ofn Wall Street to protest against the economic crisis and increasing inequality in the world, and to express their distrust in the ways in which corporate interests influenced the American government.[2] For this protest, the first visual material leading to OWS was produced for promotion: a poster displaying a ballerina standing on one leg with the other leg

[1] See <https://www.adbusters.org/blogs/adbusters-blog/million-man-march-wall-street.html>
[2] See <http://www.vancourier.com/news/adbusters-sparks-wall-street-protest-1.374299>

balancing on top of the iconic Wall Street's Charging Bull sculpture.

Adbuster's poster showing a ballerina balancing on Di Modica's work, the 'Charging Bull'

On the following day, the 14th of July, the Twitter account with the username @OccupyWallSt was created, to support the protests. In the meantime, and in the background of what Adbusters were organising, other groups were preparing their own actions. Unions, student groups, artists, anarchist groups, collectives such as Anonymous, and other activist groups marched on Wall Street on several occasions throughout June and July, with their small crowds finding common ground in their opposition to what the Financial District represented (Gerbaudo, 2012). In late July 2011, a group called New Yorkers Against Budget Cuts (NYAB) formed, attracting the interest of another group, which included members such as the activist, anarchist, and anthropologist David Graeber. However, upon realising that NYAB had specific demands, Graeber and his group formed the New York General Assembly (NYGA), a precursor to OWS' General Assembly and its working groups, and began discussing the path the movement should take, their demands, and the pros and cons of having leaders (Graeber, 2012; Berrett, 2011). Sometime within this period, a video surfaced, in which an Anonymous Internet group

called their followers to support the protests.

These small steps from multiple individuals and groups, using new media technologies, such as the Adbusters website, OccupyWallStreet.org, email communication, posters, online videos, Facebook, and Twitter gave rise to what would later be called the Occupy Wall Street movement, which organised its first march on the 17 September 2011. On that day, more than a thousand protesters descended on the Financial District of New York to protest against corporate greed, chanting slogans such as 'We got sold out, they got bailed out' and moving around the area, with some hundreds of them settling down with their sleeping bags at Zuccotti Park on Broadway during the night (Kavada, 2013; Jarvis, 2012; Pickerill and Krinsky, 2012). Having fallen short of the Adbusters' 20K protesters goal, squatting on the grounds of the powers they protested against was an act used both as a tool to attract the eyes of mainstream media, but also to attract more participant interest. Two days later, the first of almost 150 Occupy Facebook pages was set up, featuring a YouTube video of previous events, while the Twitter account @OccupyWallSt worked both as a broadcaster for the movement's actions and as a megaphone to call for more support and action. At this point, the digital and the on-the-ground presence of the movement began to become intertwined, with the former feeding from the latter and vice versa. This was an attempt to gain visibility and to create a voice in a discursive context, where mainstream media still refrained from reporting on OWS. The protest that Adbusters imagined had suddenly a character of its own, which was not necessarily following Adbusters' aspirations, but had still some shared cultural, political, and social alignments with movements around the world.

2.2.2 Focusing on Occupy Wall Street

The first Occupy protest began as the Occupy Wall Street movement, on the 17th of September 2011 and claimed the core role for the movement that

would later develop on a transnational level. The movement emerged with the rise of the Indignados and 15M in Spain, while in the UK students occupied a number of university buildings, in order to object to the rise in student fees from 2010 onwards. Through a collective call against economic inequality, corporate greed, and political corruption, the headquarters of the Occupy Wall Street movement in Zuccotti Park were located right next to Wall Street in New York City, outside of the world's financial capital and the New York Stock Exchange. This was a space that represented and still represents global capitalism. The occupation was abruptly evacuated in the early morning of the 15th of November. What paints it as a significant contemporary movement, however, is how its model of protest culture – occupying public spaces and squares – spread through the USA and the Western world, drawing on Occupy Wall Street's 'tactics as brand' (Dean, 2012:97). Protests on a worldwide level shared a common ground with OWS in terms of strategies, aims, and language, but at the same time they were entrenched in their own local circumstances and politics.

These movements are not something new or innovative in our ever-changing sociocultural conditions. Even in 1939, amidst world wars, Blumer argued that such movements:

> can be viewed as collective enterprises to establish a new order of life. They have their inception in the condition of unrest, and derive their motive power on one hand from dissatisfaction with the current form of life, and on the other hand, from wishes and hopes for a new scheme or system of living (Blumer 1939: 199).

The Occupy movements have articulated a wide range of ideological positions on issues such as the role of transnational corporations and companies, the role of governments and officials, the failure to preserve the world's diverse cultures and environments, and the continuing pollution of the planet. Most notably, Occupy's agendas were never definite and clear-cut with a unified set of demands and reasons. Nonetheless, even if they have been called ill-defined by some (Klein, 2011), there are certainly still

some significant meanings behind their protests' socio-political character. Occupy's difficulty in exercising a politics and changing the current system of affairs was furthered complicated by their well-known, supported, and reiterated refusal to make clear demands that could be absorbed and embraced by existing political parties, or to admit to the state's authority to implement policy. Rather, Occupy movements all over the world unequivocally avoided traditional political routes and instead of making demands, they created an alternative path into a politics that escaped established political notions.

This open political character allowed 'Occupy' to serve as a form of post-political branding that anyone could use; and for this it managed to develop and prosper in numerous cities, which articulated and adjusted the movement to their own positions. The common style of occupying spaces and squares dominated these movements and allowed journalists, academics, and the public to define themselves under the same rubric. Indeed, the common threads between all the protests under the umbrella of 'Occupy' are broadly based on the social and economic inequalities that began to be shared amongst the global population after the financial crisis of 2008, and the broadening of the gap between the rich and the poor. Even though the 21st century's socioeconomic modernisation brought up major technological developments, it also uncovered the inequity between the poor and wealthy. OWS' dominant slogan: 'We are the 99%' comes handy in describing these inequities, as I will discuss and illustrate further in Chapter 6. In this context, social movements against the subsequent social and economic inequality were, arguably, inevitable. Their largely shared sentiment was exemplified in the 'We are the 99%' slogan, which symbolised the majority of the people who felt that the economic ladder was significantly unjust compared to the upper 1% of society, and outlined their dissatisfaction with the current form of life.

On a fundamental level, Occupy refused to be identified as a political party;

following their 'No clear list of demands' strategy, they used 'tactics as brand' to spread through multiple cities in the world, to correspond with the rising social and economic inequality stemming from neoliberal capitalism. In spite of these shared strategies, we cannot argue that the Occupy movement can or should be considered as one single entity. As a protest culture, it did have several harbingers and forbearers of its ideology, but it did not stem from a definite evolution from 1990s anti-capitalist actions, the so-called London riots, the Indignados, or an unavoidable revolution that spread from the Arab world and the so-called Arab Spring to the West. There are gaps and disparities between the latter movements and the means through which OWS was formed and devised its presence.

Therefore, to argue that Occupy was a global movement would be an overstatement. The significance of Occupy's diverse movements lies somewhere in between changing cultural, social, economic, and political norms, and therefore each case demands further examination as a stand-alone entity. This thesis argues that a turn towards more specific contexts can unveil the micro and the macro characteristics of social movements' dynamics. In order to focus on these specificities, I choose to investigate Occupy Wall Street as a single movement. Occupy Wall Street was one, if not the biggest, Occupy movement in 2011 and the mother of hundreds of other movements. This places it then as a primary representative movement for Occupy in general, but it can also stand alone as its own movement, with a past, present, and future. Comparing it to other movements of its kind, OWS managed to develop itself into other working and activist groups[3] while it is also unique as a movement in its deployment of Twitter. The particularities of OWS' local, political, cultural, social, and economic dimensions can and do define it as a separate case from the rest of the Occupy movements. Hence, this thesis focuses on it, to distil its narratives and reveal its uniqueness as the first big 'Occupy' movement. In these sections, I have discussed the

[3] Some of them are Occupy Sandy, Occupy Our Homes, Occupy University.

origins, contexts and uniqueness of OWS. Now I will move into the political framework of the movement, arguing that OWS was structured from political ambiguity.

2.3 New political grammars of 'political persuasions'

A number of critics argued that OWS was the expression of a certain ideology, which hence placed it in a historical lineage that relied heavily on socialism, Marxism, and anarchism (Graeber, 2011). Indeed, some political dimensions of OWS had similarities with the aforementioned movements, and even with the 17th century Diggers (Lewycka, 2012). However, OWS can only be fathomed through its own range of political practices, one that they themselves called 'political persuasions'[4]. Between other ideologies, OWS wished for a 'capitalistic democracy' that did not favour the 1%, but one that offered a better quality of life to everyone. The refusal of OWS to construct clear demands and its definition of itself as a 'leaderless' movement, allowed for broader participation, forming a movement with people from multiple political persuasions. It gave a new syntax to social movements, since it relied on an open political identity.

This open political identity that OWS formed could connect numerous protesting positions, working around gaps, divisions and differences between participants and their beliefs. Under this rubric, we can either talk about unity or fracture. Resisting the conceptual and traditional notions of politics, OWS escaped the bounds of a set of demands, but at the same time the lack of direction may have caused it to fracture. However, it is worth pointing out that a set of demands cannot ensure success, and it can possibly result in no tangible or appreciable difference. However, in the case of OWS, the lack of direction created an ambiguous frame around it, which others extensively used to attack OWS as a non-legitimate movement. The public and varied

[4] http://occupywallst.org, Webtext dated February 5, 2012

participation in this movement can be considered more important for bringing people together than assigning the movement with a political character and placing it in specific moulds, such as the mould of 'communism' that was advocated by Dean, Chomsky, and Žižek for Occupy (Chomsky, 2012; Dean, 2012: 97; Žižek, 2012a). For example, Dean and Žižek argue that only within communism could OWS create real change, either by changing national healthcare, environmentalism, public education, collective bargaining or by progressive taxation, paid vacation, and gun control. Dean, goes a step further to suggest that communism was implicit within OWS, but needed to be made explicit for the movement to be capable of transforming society. She insists that 'politics without the organisational form of the Party is a politics without politics' (Dean, 2012: 9). But even though communism's ideals of universality, equality and revolution may exist in a wider context within OWS and can work as an 'index of a task of thought' (Dean, 2012:4) for the movement, Dean's, Žižek's, and Chomsky's claim that OWS needed to transform itself into a fight for communism, is both contrary to the conception of OWS and would also make it into a leftist protest. This view characterises it as yet another protest against capitalism, thereby limiting the movement's stretch through the social fabric, and potentially polarising the crowds.

In this section I have argued that OWS involved neither the organisation of a communist party nor the same demands, and have suggested that by identifying with 'No clear set of demands', the 2011 occupation of Zuccotti Park was opposed to high unemployment and the widening inequality between the American people. Formed by multiple participants and supporters with no clear common political lines or platforms, this movement was a struggle for common political values, based on a different democratic environment than the one of the time. I have argued that it was not a struggle aiming to overthrow capitalism, even though some of the protesters were anti-capitalists. The political dimensions of OWS, however, do not remain fixed in the boundaries of the socio-political schema surrounding

OWS, but extend into its technological dimensions too, as I will now describe.

2.3.1 The political paradox of technology

OWS' ambiguous identity, despite having the benefit of making the movement more widely accepted, has also led to the emergence of several major controversies and questions. An identity that set OWS as 'fully compatible with capitalism' and relied on technology and SMNs, signalled the arrival of a completely different vocabulary for the experience of the movement, and complicated its position when placed in such a technological environment (Dean, 2012:220). OWS' perpetuating reliance on technology brought forth some left wing critiques of OWS' engagement. Critics asked questions such as: How can a movement that is essentially against the current system of affairs still be using products of the capitalist market?

Structurally, internet technologies and SMNs are governed by a combination of flat networks allied to hierarchical protocols, such as network structures, class and gender (Jordan, 2015; boyd and Elison, 2007). As Mann and Stewart (2000:160) suggest, the optimistic view of online spaces as providers of democratic communication and reciprocity is very much questioned by the realisation that online spaces are still curbed within traditional structures of power. Links between two users on Twitter, for example, are not automatically two-directional—to follow is not necessarily to be followed. And where links are made in both directions, the effect of the power-law that rules SMNs indicates that a user with a million followers, who also follows them all back, is hardly likely to see much of what is being said (Hands, 2011:119, Webster, 2011). Admittedly, not everyone has the same degree of influence, since the number of followers, retweets, favourites and mentions amounts to a user's popularity and their influence in the rest of the network and outside of it. SMNs' user growth is also crucial to their survival: for them to expand and sell themselves as open platforms of communication, they need to constantly attract new users in order to sell more advertisements. Along these lines, Mann and Stewart (2000: 160) suggest that global access

to these platforms does not result in automatic egalitarian characteristics. The optimistic view of social media networks providing democratic communication and reciprocity is very much ousted by the realisation that online spaces are still curbed within traditional structures of power. As Barabási argues, in a similar vein, the World Wide Web is itself dominated by big hubs such as Google and Yahoo. Social media networks are hence networks that are dominated by the same power law distribution, where profiles with a great numbers of subscribers or followers rule over smaller ones (Barabási in Papacharissi, 2011: 1).

I argue that in the case of the OWS Twitter community[5], the focus of this thesis, this power law is not entirely applicable. Significance does not only lie in the number of followers a Twitter user has but the content of their communication: the stories they tell. There were still some users with only a few links to others, and some other users who may be considered as the major hubs, such as the @OccupyWallSt account. These major accounts held the whole network together in more hierarchical ways. However, both kinds of users/accounts can be considered important to the transmission of information, the organisation, and the structure of the movement (Gerbaudo, 2012:134). Even though they are affected by the power law distribution, sometimes the power of their stories becomes more important than the number of their followers, and the addition of their personal views to the collective pool of information on Twitter becomes more significant. Big hubs can transmit information to the larger audience, but the small accounts can be the ones that gather, tell, and empower narratives, helping the transmission of information and the construction of the movement online to

[5] The notion of 'community' is used here interchangeably with 'movement' and 'collective' and it is used to define a group of people with different characteristics who were linked by social ties, shared common perspectives about OWS, and/or engaged in joint action at Zuccotti Park or on Twitter. The individuals forming this community may have differed in the emphasis they placed on particular elements of OWS (e.g. its meanings, goals, importance) and could have had varied participation tactics, identified with OWS largely or minimally, or engaged with OWS during a long or short period; they are nonetheless part of what I define as a Twitter 'community'.

develop (Segerberg and Bennett, 2011). This thesis thus follows the argument that people's coexistence and communication on Twitter makes each individual user able to 'engage with asynchronously produced content over extended time' and broaden the movement's reach to different audiences irrespective of their power strength through small political expressions, the tweets (Margetts et al. 2015; boyd, 2011:39). This importance does not lie in scalability or network powers, but in tracing the meaningful narratives that constructed OWS' story throughout its final 40 days on the ground.

In other words, OWS needs to be framed within some more unconventional concepts of theoretical space, away from canonical leftist contexts, closer to multi-vocal theories regarding the interconnections between social movements and their socio-cultural contexts. By focusing too much on the online settings in and of themselves, or on the idea of OWS as a communist movement, the scope to investigate what happens when the online is intertwined with the offline, how 'the two are mutually shaped and shaping' (Hines, 2004:4), and how new political grammars are formed, is being discounted. The socio-political dimensions of the movement thus can only be traced in a multidimensional context that includes social, political, cultural and digital analysis, so as to uncover a story that offers a nuanced picture of the ways in which technology and specifically Twitter influenced the movement.

2.4 Social media, social movements: putting the story into the network

The purpose of this section is to expand on the earlier discussion about the role of SMNs on OWS by providing a scholarly, conceptual, and partly historical context for the relationship between social media networks, in particular Twitter, and social movements. I begin by defining what social media networks are and then discuss the influence of Twitter on social

movements, drawing from previous research. Following this, I review scholarship that examines the impact of Twitter on the temporal and spatial levels of the movement, and discuss the concept of the 'virtual,' as well as the binary of online and on-the-ground spaces.

2.4.1 Defining Social Media Networks

In this thesis, I define social media networks (SMNs) following boyd and Elison's interpretation of social network sites as (2007):

> web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site.

I choose to use the term social media networks for three reasons. First, I believe 'social media' is a term used more widely in public discourse and has much better applicability to the main social media network discussed in this thesis: Twitter. Second, I use the terms 'network' because it shows how social media are currently used to bring groups of people together, who become able to transmit and exchange information for professional or social purposes. Finally, while these social media networks can be considered as sites, I will refer to them here interchangeably either as social media networks or platforms, since I consider them spaces that afford users the opportunity to voice their views or initiate action, instead of just acting as informational sites or websites.

The dynamic nature of SMNs has started to become evident since the beginning of the 2000s, when social media networks such as MySpace and Facebook managed to draw in millions of users. Many scholars argued, and a lot still do, that these sites are inseparable from their everyday lives (Wellman and Haythornthwaite, 2008). At the time of writing, there were

hundreds of SMNs used worldwide, with diverse affordances. Nevertheless, their digital and technological characteristics are somewhat persistent and the cultures they forge miscellaneous. Many work as sites for maintaining prior social connections, while others connect people who did not know each other before entering the social network (boyd and Elison, 2007). Some of these sites provide networks based on sexual (e.g. Grindr), religious (e.g. www.christianmingle.com), photo sharing (e.g. Instagram), racial, ethnic, or other interest-based identities. While other SMNs keep coming to the foreground, concurrently changing the discussion around the use of technology in human interaction, scholars from different disciplines have investigated them to uncover their culture, connotations, and processes, as well as their users' commitments or ties with them. As Lievrouw (2011: 7) argues, new media are defined as a blend of 'information and communication technologies and their social contexts,' involving the devices of communication, the communicative practices that people employ while using them and the events that are created after the use of these devices.

I suggest that SMNs can be said to form a portal into 'informational utopics' (Juris, 2005: 15) and have predominantly become *ad hoc* 'common space[s] of information flows in which the political and cultural stakes of globalisation are played out'; a juxtaposition of associations and movements that establish the importance of social media when they are populated by political discourses (Terranova, 2004:42). The digital space aids in the creation of narratives where the feeling of being together produces shared experiences and identities, creating a space that leads to communication that may be transforming public engagement by being together though being physically apart (Papacharissi, 2015). By using SMNs, people have facilitated a real, practical field of action where social action is recognised, created, contested, and played out.

Goran Therborn (1998:7) foresaw this 'flattening of social processes', which combined with the global spread of hierarchical social power systems, such

as the spread of neoliberalism, have transformed the world into 'an arena where nationally determined actors meet, interact, and influence each other' (1998:9). In this context, SMNs may now be working as interpersonal communication networks that promote political participation by transmitting information on how to get involved and convey a sense of duty or obligation to serve the local community (Hands, 2011:17). By following Vitak's et al. (2011) suggestions, SMNs have the affordances to offer a comfortable environment for those not normally participating in politics to explore and discuss political activity by seeing their friends engaged in political behaviour. This might then bring to the surface political participation either in online environments or offline places (Papacharissi, 2015; Gerbaudo, 2012; Highfield, 2016). Extending the concept of 'participatory culture' (2006) proposed by Jenkins, Chapter 4 and 5 will elaborate on what several researchers, and particularly Bennett (2008a; see also: Hartley, 2010 on 'silly citizenship' and Hargreaves and Hartley, 2016) have increasingly been calling for: the need to reconsider aspects such as political participation, or the obedient citizen, by paying more attention to the importance of shared interests and alternative notions of civic engagement and citizenship for a 'greater good'. Social media networks allow these networked publics to elaborate and sustain their social connections, which often leads to a desire to care about what others go through (e.g. Papacharissi, 2015; Kligler-Vilenchik et al., 2012). Twitter may in fact have produced an effective democratic space that afforded a degree of synchronous online and offline political learning, attitude formation and action for OWS to develop and attract supporters (similar to what Latour talked about in 2005/1989 regarding effective democratic spaces).

Bennett and Toft (2008) have argued that narratives can be the vehicles to scale movement networks up or down. They suggest that there is a potential cross-fertilising relationship between networks and narratives, and the ways in which networks become important aspects of the narratives produced about and for social movements, and vice versa. Similarly here, I do not

consider narratives as independent of networks or network structures. I instead choose to talk about narratives as the meanings of the produced content on Twitter, rather than exploring the structures of those narratives, which are unquestionably dependant on networks. The rhetorical practices of doing something together, or supporting the same cause, augment social media participation by empowering participants' narratives of a community membership. These SMN participation affordances become evident in discussions about the relationship of OWS and other movements with Twitter.

2.4.2 The emergence of Twitter as a platform for protest communities

Twitter has risen as an accessible platform for organising and communicating protests worldwide, even though it never intended to gain such a role when it was first launched in 2006. When it was introduced it was used as a space for sharing individual posts without any means of interaction between users, except the follow/unfollow feature. Twitter users, called twitterers or tweeterers, could and still can post and/or read short messages that are capped at 140 characters, called tweets, which resemble SMS texting (Greer and Ferguson, 2011; Fox, Zickuhr and Smith, 2009). As more users gathered on the platform after 2009, and interaction between them seemed fundamental, 'shouting into the void' of the digital world was not enough to satisfy their demands. Taking matters into their own hands, with the subsequent help of Twitter's engineering architects, twitterers slowly introduced the reply feature of '@username', the hashtag feature (#) to stamp discussions on the same subject; and the retweet feature (RT) to repost someone else's tweet. Each of these aimed to facilitate better communication channels (Bilton, 2013:207; Segerberg and Bennett, 2011).

Following embryonic use of Twitter, ranging from political campaigns (Burns and Eltham, 2009) to educational backchannels (Atkinson, 2009), by 2009 important shifts were witnessed in the use of Twitter, which saw it departing from its role as a broadcaster of 'personal status updates' to news and

witnessing. People wished to share their experiences or report on them on Twitter (Johnson, 2009). Through these methods, Twitter is nowadays perceived as a space where like-minded people who are affected by the same events — often a violent conflict or indeed a financial and political crisis — can share relevant information, verbal or photographic eyewitness accounts, or even organise events through the network. Indeed, this element of instantaneous dissemination has been fundamental in its use of protest movements.

Irrespective of the power structures that govern social media networks and the questionable workings of social movements with social networks, it would be unwise not to talk about how some of the most noteworthy civil unrest cases in the last decade have used Twitter to organise proceedings or recruit people. From Moldova in 2009 (Mungiu-Pippidi and Munteanu, 2009), to the Iran uprising during the elections in 2009 (Morozov, 2009), the famous Tunisian revolution in 2010 (Zuckerman, 2011), and the revolution in Egypt a year later (Attia, et al., 2011), these mobilisations formed a premonition and a warning of what would follow in 2011: The Occupy Wall Street movement and the Occupy protests around the world (Preston, 2011; Schneider, 2011; Karimi and Stirling, 2011; Gerbaudo, 2012). A number of studies have looked into the role of Twitter between activist communities in the Occupy movements in the US (Penney and Dadas, 2014) or of the role of Facebook in environmental protests in Romania and the UK (Mercea, 2013), while others have investigated the influence of Twitter on structural changes within the movements' dynamics (Bennet and Segerberg, 2013; Earl et al., 2013; Borge-Holthoefer, Rivero, and Moreno, 2011). But none of these studies have looked into the content produced on Twitter.

In line with research on the revolutionary movements, such as the Arab Spring presented in the Middle East after 2010 (Tufekci, 2012; Howard et al., 2013; Dunn, 2011; Khamis and Vaughan, 2011; Lotan et al., 2011), research on OWS has demonstrated that social media, including Twitter, influenced

political, social, and cultural discourses and shadowed the events that led to the protests on the ground (Bennett, Segerberg and Walker, 2014; Tufekci, 2014; Gerbaudo, 2012; Juris, 2012;). Twitter in 2011 worked much differently to how it works now. I.e. there was no algorithm that controlled the visibility of tweets or their sequence. In 2011, a tweet's sequence was strictly chronological and Twitter's business model was very much limited to advertising that was not as 'intrusive' or as prevalent as it is in 2016. Twitter worked as a speedway for exchanging messages between people who were interested in finding out about or were involved with OWS, and pointing to how they could participate in it (Papacharissi, 2015). While some researchers have conducted in-depth interviews with OWS-activists to offer an understanding of Twitter's influence on their practices (Penney and Dadas, 2014; Gabbatt et al, 2011), others have deployed qualitative analysis on YouTube as a medium of mixed repertoire platforms (Thorson et al., 2013). Offering important insights about the ways in which SMNs' practices may correspond with activists' practices on-the-ground, this existing work has informed my research and analyses. Nonetheless, as many have suggested, Twitter's close link to political and social movements has promoted the 'Twitter revolution' maxim which has allowed it to, in some cases, overtake the discussions around the wider discourses and contexts of these movements (Parmelee and Bichard, 2011; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2009). In a similar vein, I would argue that by defining some social movements through the bounds of their use of Twitter, previous research has managed to strip them from surrounding discourses of social change, turning the focus of the discussion to the technologies they used, instead of paying attention to the movements' causes.

Optimists such as Jarvis (2008) for example, viewed social media as the opportunity for witnesses to take control of their experiences, in the process defining the category of 'citizen journalists' as the leading news-providers (Gillmore, 2004). Digital platforms and the internet, however, have been described by some as a passing fad, and by others as an ideal medium for

governmental control and surveillance (Morozov, 2011). Several scholars have argued that Twitter is far from an empowering tool for social movements. For instance, Esfandiari (2010) and Segerberg and Bennett (2011) suggested that the most active users are probably not the best leaders, while Christensen (2011) talked about how these users are usually 'themselves heavily involved in the world of blogging and online activism, thus unlikely to take a detached view of the issue'. Indeed, even though digital platforms strengthen social bonds between like-minded people, these ties by themselves are not and cannot be the catalyst for social movements (Morozov, 2011; Gladwell, 2010). According to Morozov, proactive social movements need commitment, strong ties and competent organisation with skilful leaders (Morozov, 2009; Palfrey, Etling, and Faris, 2016). On the same lines, McAdam et al. (2001:332) suggest that social movements have to 'almost by definition' involve a change in scale in order to be successful and gain momentum, while for a movement to gain strength it has to use both previously established ties and new links (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007. Furthermore, in order to empower the movement, it must pull the protesters into identifying under the same beliefs (McAdam and Tarrow, 2001), and easily allow the late-comers to mimic the strategies of the first participants (Tilly and Tarrow, 2007).

Nonetheless, the ever-dynamic use of social media networks by people worldwide has changed the way events are reported, spread, and presented. Reliance on social media for current news consumption is usually assigned to these platforms' affordances as intimate and familiar spaces, and their instantaneous nature. The information SMNs offer is extraordinary in terms of numbers, range, and speed, and it is altering the means by which events are reported, particularly through user-generated content (Bunz, 2009; Newman, 2009). In the case of the Arab Spring, scholarship has shown that Twitter allowed a wider involvement of the public, and enabled 'non-elite' voices to be heard. Indeed, it changed the way events were transmitted to the wider public (Hermida, Lewis, and Zamith, 2014; Gerbaudo, 2012).

Moving away from local and geographical groups, contemporary communities have moved, at least in part, to the online space, complementing or shifting the community on-the-ground (McEwan, 2013; Putnam, 2000). As members of such communities become more engaged in discussions online, they begin to form stronger bonds with each other, which in return may promote positive or negative sentiments and attitudes, and may consequently making their community stronger, with a greater sense of determination and tenacity. In a similar way, the open access of such platforms gives a space for activists around the world, who are part of different movements, to communicate, work together, and share tactics and information (Bastos and Mercea, 2015).

Social media platforms offer spaces where users can get hold of important information and can obtain the means to create communities. Digital platforms can form social links and friendships, which can either work as support networks, shared interests, or information-networks (Gruzd and Haythornthwaite, 2013; Baym and Ledbetter, 2009; Wellman, Quan-Haase, Witte, and Hampton, 2001; Wright, 2000;). This mediated communication between community members creates a different kind of communication, in which individuals participate primarily around shared interests or issues. From this end of the spectrum then, Twitter may have the potential to alter the ways in which people communicate. It may not revolutionise communication, but it may be creating new networks. For instance, there is evidence that student activists managed to form productive online networks (Biddix and Park, 2008), and that online ties can help the organisation of and development of movements' aims and strategies (Harlow and Harp, 2012; Hanneman and Riddle, 2005; Scott, 1991).

Within this framework, of movements that incorporate social media in their processes, we witness a move toward what Bennett and Segerberg (2012:739) describe as connective rather than collective action. Conventional collective action, according to Bennett and Segerberg is 'associated with high

levels of organisational resources and the formation of collective identities' while connective action relies on 'personalised content sharing across media networks'. While in collective action digital communication does not affect the dynamics of the movements, in connective action it extensively alters the movement or action. According to Bennett and Segerberg the collective is coherent and well organised. However, in my view contemporary movements' collectives are always in process, more open, loose and multifaceted, as conceptualised by Melucci (1996). Similarly, Kavada (2015) examining the case of OWS, has argued that social media's conversations and texts blur the boundaries between the internal and external dynamics of movements. In relation to the specific case of OWS, Kavada suggests that the use of social media formed open-ended dynamic processes that were based on and enhanced the values of inclusiveness and direct participation OWS stood for. This move from discussing movements in the frame of the collective toward their contextual connective actions has also brought to the surface new meanings for collective identities, which I will discuss in the last section of this chapter.

At the end of the previous subsection I critiqued how too much techno-optimism is deterministic and fails to acknowledge a movement's reason for existence–stemming from the cause and the opportunity for social change. I take this as a point of departure here, to argue that the meaning of Twitter for OWS is threefold. First, we have to recognise that social media and Twitter specifically, have become a core mode of communication, organisation, and representation of social movements, even the dangers and risks they involve. Second, they have provided social movements with the ease and speed they lacked in previous decades, and thus have allowed them to form new networks, which we will look into in the following section. Third, the introduction of social media into the organisation of social movements has caused a move from a fixed collective notion to a more fluid concept for describing the collective; one in which the content of SMN communication is integral to the movement's nature.

At this point it also important to highlight that the purpose of this study is neither to celebrate Twitter or SMNs in general, nor to discard the doubts and worries they elicit. Instead, this thesis suggests that there is a historic process under way, which is creating new political articulations that afford new characteristics for social life. If SMNs can be seen to encapsulate a new form of social tie, one must understand that this is not a closure of human society, a final realisation or *telos,* or dialectic move from social structure to anarchy. The fact that SMNs have enhanced the capacity of individuals to organise and construct a movement and inscribe themselves on the world, both as individuals and as part of a community, thus acts as a reinforcement of Latour's argument that 'society is not what holds us together, it is what is held together' (Latour in Law, 1986:276). Society is something that is constantly in process: evolving, and propagating. Definitions of society as a structural or static entity are contested by digital technology, and thus social scientists are left to study 'the formal properties of social configurations' (Scott, 2000: 9) within networks of heterogeneous materials. Either those are coming from SMNs or the on-the-ground presence of movements.

2.5 A new reality model for space and time

In this section, I draw on the assemblage and the fluidity of social media communication, to enhance my argument concerning social movement stories on Twitter. The importance of this conceptualisation rests in the complex layered histories formed on Twitter as a non-materialised, flexible space with liquid timelines. In order to unpack this fluidity, I will introduce the influence of ANT theory on analyses of networked spaces, and then move on to the ways in which human geography has examined space and time in relation to social media. Indeed, I will suggest that Twitter's hybridity composes it as a chronotopic platform with no clear frames.

Latour, in his talk at 'The International Seminar on Network Theory' in 2010, argued that the constant online boundless navigation of back and forth, inflicts 'multiple and fully reversible combinations of highly complex

individual constituents and multiple and fully reversible aggregates' (Latour, 2011: 804). This navigational movement within SMNs introduces a perpetual continuum from the online to the on-the-ground and vice versa, in such easy and sleek ways that border lines become blurred. By tracing and sketching the instantaneous transmission of knowledge, information, and political action presented within SMNs in high-speed, velocity and intensity, I believe we can pin down the ways in which the online and offline actors of the movement are blurred and reformed across spatial and temporal distances. By existing *in situ*, here and now, *hic et nunc*, one ceases to define the protesters and their social interactions. It is no longer possible then to imagine contemporary movements as an 'assemblage of autonomous nomadic spaces.' Rather, movements should now be depicted as an assemblage of spaces that depend on each other, occupying both the digital and the on-the-ground spaces (Appadurai, 1996:1). In this way, the OWS community on Twitter can be considered as part of the community on the ground to the point where the two become so interlaced with one another that they cannot be considered as different entities, but a single community that exists simultaneously in a hybrid space.

Human geography has especially talked about space, place, and time as three completely rational concepts, one dependent on the other, produced and co-produced through diverse and fluid processes (Harvey, 2000; Thrift, 2000; Massey, 1994). Considering these characteristics in the digital world, spatiality becomes nonlinear, facilitated through processes and connections between multiple spatial and temporal breadths. Moving away from territorial and geometric space, place and time become fluid and liquid, in the sense that we now live in spaces which are more discursive, affective, technological, organisational, and physical. In turn, these create spaces of belonging, change, and cohesion. There is no sense of exact territorial, local, or physical space, but rather a mixture of digital and on-the-ground that creates new possibilities.

It is the movement's shifting social media story that becomes the axis on which the digital and the on-the-ground spaces are shaped, combining Foucault's twin sense of heterotopia: a disjointed sense of writing that mixes up grammar and syntax; and a disorienting 'place without a place' (Foucault and Miskowiec, 1967). Thrown into a flux between social media networks and on-the-ground protests, OWS Twitter story should not and cannot be defined as belonging to either of the two spaces. In Marxist terms, everything seems 'pregnant with its contrary' (Marx in Berman, 1982:36), assigning everything with a double meaning. This heterotopic open space therefore is inviting conceptions of fluidity that go beyond fixed spaces. This in-between liminal space becomes the new reality in which 'the real sites […] are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted' (Foucault and Miskowiec, 1967). Subsequently, the story of the movement is rooted in the absence of known spaces and the extension of Twitter as an instrument that resists traditional network connections. Thinking of OWS as a movement thrown into a heterotopic flux, the need to disentangle its complexity and its resulted ambiguity becomes more pressing.

Actor-Network Theory (ANT) theory and Latour have argued for this shift in considering human and nonhuman elements as equally significant in these newly formed spatial concepts. In ANT, space, even though it remains physical to some degree, is also relative and depends on the practices that can take place within it. With this in mind, places such as SMNs can be considered as the spatial and temporal links between networks of multiple lengths and durations, particularly if we think of social media networks as 'a contingent and ever-shifting mesh of interactive processes' partly produced by globalisation (Yeung and Olds, 1999:535). Interactivity on Twitter's hybrid spaces, for example, can be considered as new spatiotemporal locale, which:

> […] may be imagined as particular articulations of these social relations, including local relations "within" the place and those many connections which stretch beyond

> it. And all of these embedded in complex, layered, histories. […] This is place as open, porous, hybrid—this is place as meeting place […]' disrupted by 'the absolute particularity of the mixtures of influences found together there (Massey, 1999:22).

From this angle, the use of multiple SMNs or multiple channels on the same SMN do not facilitate different social worlds; as Graham argues, 'there is not one single, unified cyberspace; rather there are multiple, heterogeneous networks, within which telecommunications and information technologies become closely enrolled with human actors, and with other technologies, into systems of sociotechnical relations across space' (Graham, 1998:178; cf. Kitchin, 1998:387). All these mark the urgency to see political activity and communities in places that are multiple, open, and contested (Amin, Massey, and Thrift, 2000). OWS hence owns a cultural narrative that contributes to and develops the movement in a spatio-temporality formed by diverse elements, spaces, and times. For this reason, the social capabilities of the movement in the first instance do not lie entirely in the efficiency of the communication technologies, but merely in the situated uses of such technologies by the protesters.

Taking all this into consideration we face a different dilemma: whether to continue using the term 'virtual space' or not to talk about spaces such as Twitter. Early scholarship into online spaces described them as virtual spaces and talked about the potential of creating 'virtual communities', and creating a detached-from-reality social space (Rheingold, 1994; Bromberg, 1996; Jones, 1997; Wellman and Gulia, 1999). In the same way, modern analyses of 'cyberspace' discussed it as a site of disembodied fragmentation, manifold personas, and shifting 'masked' presentations of the self (Turkle, 1995). But while current scholarship has moved away from talking about the internet as 'the cyberspace' or as 'a virtual space' (e.g. Isin and Ruppert, 2015), it still remains partly faithful to Vasseleu's position that online spaces offer 'the illusion that there is a way of being in possession of something without being

reduced to matter oneself' (1997:56). I instead argue that most users know they do not exceed the physical world when online; some of them like to ignore and adapt other roles, covers, and characters, but they do not live under the false assumption that one space is more real than the other. Therefore, they do not knowingly surrender to the illusion that Turkle (2015) insists upon; rather they choose to engage with social and cultural issues in different ways than if they were faced with on-the-ground events.

Following Baudrillard's terms, virtual reality technology is not just another entity that inhabits the same world we live in, but rather a reality we are immersed in and living through. Baudrillard argues that the hyperreal – a copy more real than the real – raises questions regarding the existence of *the original* and reveals that the mere search for *the original* is a futile pursuit. In this context, in relation to the case of OWS, we are not talking about the disappearance of the real, but rather its transformation through the virtual, or through the digital. Drawing from this, in a world where people spend more and more time online, turning their once solely analogue lives into hyperreal lives, the so called 'virtual world' becomes meshed with the 'analogue world.' In this formation, the real is renewed and adapts to the technological advances of the internet. The development of technology has managed to enhance this concept, drawing more and more people into a cultural 'obsession' with the hyperreal (Ryan, 2001:29). This hyperreal though cannot go much further than the 'real,' as a space where reality happens.

Undoubtedly, Baudrillard when talking about 'the hyperreal' in the 1990s was thinking about the role of TV in the creation of a hyperreal culture, but digital means may also produce a hyperreality that is not entirely subjected to the mass media. Rather, it depends on people's social media interactions. I suggest that in order to find out whether virtual space is disappearing or not, we need to explore its connection to a novel notion of hyperreality. In fact, social media today stress a more complex relationship between the so-called analogue and the digital, deconstructing the modern subject's 'physical'

condition and subverting the relation of its representation to the real. In this way, reality becomes the result of the combination of the screen's reality and analogue reality—or better described here, and as I sugest, as the 'on-the-ground' reality. As the boundaries between the space on social media and space on-the-ground are fading away, we should therefore not divide the online from the on-the-ground/ virtual, based on strict distinctions any longer.

I argue that the OWS community possesses a dual character because the idea of the digital has turned real. As Baudrillard exclaimed: 'simulacra have become reality! Today simulacra guarantee the continuation of the real' (Baudrillard, 1996: 99), but today's social media offer this guarantee further than the case he made about TV. This has happened because reality has gone through a transformation where the culture on screen has entered the norm, where both the sense of the social and of the communal are empowered by an incessant inscription of all things with social media: millions of servers, bits and bytes on the internet, algorithms, and big data. Specifically, the on-the-ground 'stuff' of the social are not merely human, neither just 'non-social elements' (Latour, 2011:159), but are formed by networks of objects-people. These act as a 'metaphor for social life that is fluid involving thousands of networks, people, machines, programs, texts and images in which quasi-subjects and quasi-objects mix together' (Urry, 2003:63).

Twitter in this context becomes the oligopticon that 'holds the landscape firmly flat' and manages to create a temporality that 'connect[s] the actors together.' In the process, it creates a networked community of like-minded people, while at the same time answering one of the questions regarding the movement's origins and one of the research questions of this thesis: Where and how are the discursive features of the movement actually being produced? The hyperreal social routines that structure and maintain connections between and within online and on-the-ground protest

communities are the ones that create the sense of the real, of togetherness, and collectivity (Papacharissi, 2011:58).

This section had two strands of argument: first, that we have moved into a mixed-space of online and on-the-ground communication; and second, that these new definitions of a mixed-mode space may have even taken over the concept of the 'virtual,' thus moving it away from discussions regarding the digital. In previous sections, I have pointed to the ways in which contemporary movements are conveniently framed as 'social media revolutions'. Instead, I assert that there is a need to position these movements within their defined goals, and suggest that we should move away from the paradigm of the 'Twitter revolution' towards the discussion of social media as part and parcel of the everyday workings of social movements. This argument links back to the discussion regarding the new 'political persuasions' of contemporary social movements; those movements lean away from conventional notions of strict political definitions, moving toward concepts that rely on social change, equality, and fairness.

2.6 Reading OWS' Network Community

The first coordinate of OWS has relied on the socio-political circumstances OWS and its sister-movements rose from: the economic crisis, the growing social inequality it brought to light, and its ambiguous political context. The second coordinate has focused on the ways in which SMNs have influenced the spatial and temporal presence of individuals in the world. Indeed, I have suggested that there is a new sense of 'reality' in the world, which is increasingly intertwined with social media networks, setting socialising and the sharing of interests at the core of what once was labelled 'the virtual' or 'the original'. The third distinctive coordinate of OWS, a plausible compliment to the second, is the creation of affective networked communities. Here, I build on the previous two dimensions of OWS to argue that communities have now moved away from the restraints of geographical spaces and can be conceptualised through qualities where digital space becomes a culture, a

scene of ideas where sharing interpersonal sentiments without physical proximity is realised (Calhoun, 1980:105; Anderson, 1991). The literature dealing with the creation of social movement communities for this section is divided into two strands: scholarship linked to affective notions of social movements and scholarship about networks and social movements. The following section will thus begin by bringing together previous sections, before introducing the network dimensions of social movement communities and later discussing how *affect* influences and forms these networked communities.

2.6.1 From Groups to Networks

Studying social movements or communities as networks has been an object of academic interest for years. During the 1960s, a strand of sociological network analysis dealt with political parties and trade unions (Booth and Babchuk, 1969), or was deployed to discuss how social movements recruit their members through networks of common friends and family (Fernandez and McAdam, 1988; Klandermans and Oegema, 1987; Snow et al., 1986). These social movements were based on the process of identifying a problem, authenticating it, and acting against or for it (Blumer, 1971). In this strict context, a social movement was defined as the aggregate of 'shared grievances and generalised beliefs (loose ideologies) about the causes and possible means of reducing grievances' (Zald and McCarthy, 1987:16-17).

In the meantime, work by Tilly (1978), deviated from seeing social movements as a result of political expression, and instead saw them as unfolding processes, practices, and cycles, which belonged and could be examined through historical analysis. Network research, in this view, adheres to the structural elements of movements, instead of dynamics, or 'concrete practices', that brought the movements into existence and sustained them. McDonald's comment on these processes heavily critiqued scholarship that focused solely on the confines of structure and organisation, maintaining the opinion that 'concepts of networks appear disembodied and too located in a

culture of simultaneity - typically researchers attempt to "map" networks in a way that disembodies them, and locates them in a one-dimensional time' (2006: 37). McDonald, a scholar part of the new social movement research (NSM), largely influenced by Alan Touraine's and Alberto Melucci's works, set out to unpack the 'large-scale structural and cultural changes' that caused conflicts within a society and ultimately lead to the development of a social movement (Diani, 1992:5). The NSM strand focuses on the significance of solidarity and shared collective identities for social movements, and it will be discussed later in Section 2.7.3. Pointedly, research into contemporary social movements has developed extensively and it is still breaking ground (see Snow, Soule, and Kriesi, 2003; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1996; Tarrow, 1998).

The advent of the internet and its wide use in social movements was firstly noted during the anti-globalisation movements. In this framework, Juris (2008) argued that there was a horizontal network logic guiding a new political sphere that was extensively using mailing lists and websites. Yet, mailing lists can be considered as being among the first spaces to host digital communities (Kavada, 2009), although social media networks have now moved into different structures of communities. As I discussed in more detail in Section 1.4.2.1, SMNs and especially Twitter, have worked as tools to coordinate social movements, organise and stage live street protests, produce and distribute content, 'advertise' the movements' activities, identities, values, create discussions, and share information (Lievrouw, 2011:124). On Twitter specifically, people found a space where like-minded individuals who supported the movement reported on what was happening, talked about their experiences, shared opinions, photographs, links, music, and videos. Anatoliy Gruzd et al. (2011) have even argued that platforms such as Twitter can be regarded as an *information neighbourhood*, where friends meet to receive, share, and communicate information. Networking tools such as Twitter and Facebook do not form movements by themselves, but they are useful instruments, since they resemble to a certain degree 'the horizontal

network structure and democratic experiments of the movements themselves' (Hardt and Negri, 2011:36-37). In this respect, as Hardt and Negri (2011) argue, Twitter becomes useful to OWS for pulling crowds into events and protests, and for getting reactions, or 'polling the views' (Hardt and Negri, 2011:36-37), on current events in real time. In their words 'the clearest clues lie in the internal organisation of the movements themselves—specifically, the way the encampments experiment with new democratic practices (37).'

OWS, in a similar way to the rest of the Occupy movements, evolved around the 'multitude form' distinguished through recurring 'assemblies and participatory-making structures' (38). Hardt and Negri's multitude concept describes the fluid and interconnected ties between individuals or groups, which enable a protest against power structures and conventions to be realised. Their concept highlights the multiplicity of social relationships and networks of resistance, and tries to distinguish between community definitions, from working class, people, crowd, or masses to mobs, to grasp the means by which social actors may create open, coordinated networks of resistance. At the same time, these networks remain as part of the traditional societal structure, defying political parties' structure and organisation (Hard and Negri, 2004: xiv-xvi). To an extent, the multitude concept resonates with the discussion of OWS, as it can be applied to the manifold ties between the social actors' part of the movement and its networks of resistance. Yet, stronger analytical concepts are needed to unpack the dynamics of the movement, underline theoretical frames and break down the empirical material into meaningful chunks.

Diani's definition of social movements as networks can work as a framework for navigating OWS as 'networks of informal relationships between a multiplicity of individuals and organisations, who share a distinctive collective identity and mobilise resources on conflictual issues' (2000:387). I will discuss collective identity in the following section, but here I elaborate on Diani's

idea of the multiplicity of individuals and organisations, which can form the starting point for a definition of OWS, its processes, rhetorics, and practices. As I have stressed in the Introduction, this thesis is purposefully leaving the *how* questions out of discussion and focuses specifically on the *why* and the *what* discourses and narratives form social movements. Instead of examining networks from the fixed and passive angle of their structural elements and participation in terms of political engagement (see Diani and McAdam, 2003), in this thesis I am more interested in unravelling the dynamic engagement of protesters and their supporters on Twitter through the cognitive processes, which bring the movement into action. I then take Diani's idea of movements as informal relationships as a point of departure to talk about OWS' community on Twitter. In the words of Melucci, I aim to look into the networks of contemporary social movements, which make visible how 'collective processes come into contact with individual experience and day-to-day experience,' (2006b:2) through SMNs, and more precisely through Twitter.

The hybrid network structure of social movements has also influenced other social structures. Traditional organisations have changed from being rigidly hierarchical to more adaptable, horizontal, hybrid structures (Chadwick, 2012). In order to reach to these new kinds of structures, organisations have begun to depend on the efficiency of individual or collective production of content by their users, this content's decentralised qualities, and the relationship between individualised action and SMNs (Bennett, 2012; Benkler, 2006). The rise of SMNs indeed proposes a shift within the organisation of online communities. While websites designated to communities with the same interests still blossom, social media networks are mainly formed around people, not interests. Social media networks are organised as personal, self-centred networks, with the individual as the focus, in control of their own community. This characteristic of SMNs' singularity was pointed out in the first academic articles regarding SMNs' processes. Boyd (2004) investigated how users on Friendster mediated presentations of

the self and of community, while in a later article Donath and boyd (2004) argued that 'public displays of connection' work as essential identity indications that assist users to operate within the socially networked arena, both as individuals and as part of a community. Group pages and group accounts have, however, altered the reliance on the 'personal', since we can now talk about collective social media accounts as much as we talk about personal accounts.

The preceding description charts precisely the workings of social structures where, as Wellman argues, 'the world is composed of networks, not groups' (1988:37). As this thesis argues, the immersion of social media into social movements has induced a new context for online communities, one which has brought with it networked communities, which create structures that may not be horizontal, but are certainly influential to movements such as OWS. Twitter becomes more significant than other platforms in this instance because it gives the opportunity to various individual users to add to discussions online (Meraz and Papacharissi, 2013).

Irrespective of the debate surrounding SMNs as capable of accommodating collective deliberation, SMNs may have an essential role in facilitating conversations during protest events and emergencies (Lotan et al., 2011; Hughes and Palen, 2009). The majority of empirical and theoretical studies on the internet and its relationship with social movements focus on the ways in which protest events and activist communities have attempted to use it to empower and grow their mechanisms of action, and to organise protests (Van Laer and Van Aelst, 2010; Bennett, 2003). The decline of costs in communication has offered the opportunity for activists to transmit information affordably, more quickly, and in simpler ways, while it has allowed these communities to sustain ties with other individuals, communities, and movements. The internet has also promoted the growth of 'weak ties', which offers activists the opportunity to control and expand their social networks and partners better (Valenzuela, Arriagada, and Schulman,

2012; Bennett, Breunig, and Givens, 2008). These processes have enabled a more practical field for enlisting interested parties, collective means, and the rise of collective identities. Indeed, these processes cut across movements and activist groups with similar concerns, which usually spawn worldwide protests, as I have mentioned earlier (Della Porta and Mosca, 2005; Bennett, 2003).

In their qualitative study of OWS, Penney and Dadas (2014) found that content circulation on Twitter was very important in implementing counter publics that denounced power structures, such as the mainstream media. Similar research found that Twitter has been an important political communication tool during mobilisations, with varied communication, discussion, and information transmission capacities (Earl et al., 2013; Huang and Sun, 2013; Lotan et al., 2011). Twitter has indeed been in part responsible for the construction of, as Gerbaudo argues, 'a choreography of assembly' (2012:15). As a platform that created a public space for OWS, Twitter enabled and guided the physical assembling of protesters and managed to construct spaces that guided demonstrators. It did not create a space of 'absolute and unrestrained participation' (15) but an emotional space where users created a new sense of community. As in the role of actual choreographers, these leaders remained in the background of the scene in the social media space, influencing people, structuring and sustaining the movement. Through their soft and emotional leadership, that often appealed to people's love for their country, for freedom or equality, this leadership was 'by and large indirect as well as invisible but nonetheless effective in giving collective action a certain degree of coherence and a sense of direction' (Gerbaudo, 2012:5). At the same time, this collective action can be traced in a 'one-time system' where the realisation of OWS' community is 'portrayed simultaneously in the world and inside its networks of production' (17), offline and online, as I have discussed earlier in relation to the spatial and temporal dimensions of OWS.

Social media did not automatically spur collective action. It took a lot of organisation, timing and systematic arrangements — a choreography of assembly — for OWS' protests and its occupying camp at Zuccotti Park to materialise. SMNs like Twitter set the scene for OWS' display and paved the appropriate paths for OWS to be expressed in the streets. OWS' corporeal anatomy, however, was such that a big percentage of its significance was found in the physical occupation of spaces. Still, the network structure of this movement was of major importance to these protests: the online fed into the offline, the material to the immaterial, and the machines into the people. Information allowed the movement to sustain a protest culture that relied, if not entirely, at least to a great degree, on the networking capacities of its community (Feigenbaum, Frenzel, McCurdy, 2013). In the case of OWS, the interactivity that stemmed from information exchanges on Twitter and other SMNs worked as the glue that held the movement together, enhancing the credibility of the OWS community and creating a space where people connected to each other (Bell and Newby, 1974). Similar to a traditional network, Twitter functioned as a social, cultural, or civic connecting space for OWS where users (not just the movement's supporters but also users who did not identify with the movement) discussed issues that rose during the movement's lifetime. This multiplicity of individual voices in a networked environment changes one of the core elements of social movements: it transforms collective networks into more personal and affective structures of communication. However, it must be acknowledged that there are some pitfalls that come with this transformation, such as the fracture that occurs through the focus on individual discourses, instead of on the bigger impact of collective action.

2.7 Personalising the Collective Networks through Affect

Scholars have argued that digital platforms afford visibility to marginalised communities (Berry, Kim, and Spigel, 2010; Couldry, 2010), while others have taken it a step further to suggest that these publics are affectively networked together through loaded discourses. They suggest that these affective

networked communities are formed through digital structures of expression and connection (Papacharissi, 2015), or feelings of engagement (van Dijck, 2013; Karatzogianni and Kuntsman, 2012; Dean, 2010). These feelings prompt latent ties that are essential to bringing networked communities together. Even though online engagement should not be confused with meaningful effect, since online action does not automatically translate to on-the-ground action and vice versa, we cannot ignore the fact that online engagement may be the harbinger of hierarchical disruption, bestowing on social movements the much needed momentum that accelerates or enhances on-the-ground action. At the same time, it may attract individuals and formulate networked communities, either on-the-ground or in imagined communities (Howard and Hussain, 2013). Recent literature suggests that the key to sustaining these communities is through a feeling of belonging and solidarity, however ephemeral or fading those feelings may be. These networked communities become themselves 'a record or trace' (Dean, 2010:22) of what they are at the same time on online platforms. Commenting and reacting on social media, individual users grow 'feelings of community' (Dean, 2010:22), which may either lead to an actual on-the-ground community and/or to an online community remaining passive. I argue that the key to a successful network community may in fact be hidden in its affective dynamics.

Scholarship published in the last decade has given much attention to the ways in which affect influences social movements, thus indicating a growing influence of the concept of 'affect publics' (Papacharissi, 2015) on both the everyday and the political realms (Chadwick, 2013; Gregg and Seigworth, 2007; Van Zoonen, 2007; Polletta and Jasper, 2001). Debates around the role and influence of affect in politics have always been present. Even though affect's impact on the public and private realms has been established, discussions surrounding politics tend to form their arguments based on reason. By making 'rationality' the only line of analysing civic life, political analysis remains trapped in conventional and stereotypical notions

surrounding the means through people organise and participate in protests. Papacharissi (2015) has specifically stressed the predicament of 'philosophy, political theory, and common sense' to 'view emotion and reason as two opposite forces that must somehow be reconciled so that people can function as informed citizens' (10). Similarly, Habermas has been one of the strong believers in the distinction between civic involvement based on rational action and thought instead of emotions. He stresses the importance of rationality for democratic politics, thus romanticising archaic systems of public participation in politics (Fraser, 1987). He believes that a public sphere that depends on media conveying messages that invoke and depend on emotions would lead to a crumbling democratic governance and manipulation of the public. Habermas emphasises the importance of civic systems that would be able to withstand and prevent unsubstantiated claims made by authoritarian systems, which have traditionally relied upon affective mastery and emotional control (Calhoun, 1992). Habermas' concerns are valid and should be present in an era where emotional manipulation governs a large section of our politics' rhetoric and discourses.[6] However, a tight and static sphere in which reason alone governs the public sphere cannot be entirely participatory and engaging. As Dahlgren (2011) notes:

> Participation is fundamentally a social act, based in human communication, and contingent on sociality. All too often analyses ignore the importance of sociality in stimulating and maintaining participation, how interactions with others actually serve to support (or not) participatory activities.

We should therefore examine social media platforms not through reason, but through the spectrum of social lives being lived and experienced in these new networks; in these spaces, friendships, relationships, and political

[6] See for example, Katherine Viner's article on how Brexit and Trump's campaigns have been structured based on feelings of fear and grandeur: https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/jul/12/how-technology-disrupted-the-truth [Accessed 26th of August 2016]

leanings are created through shared meanings, usually appearing in affective formats. Based on Dahlgren's work there are four ways we can describe rationality: purposive/instrumental, value/belief oriented, effectual, and traditional/conventional (see: Horkheimer, 1974). Instrumental rationality is calculated and deliberately planned; rationality of value/belief is based on moral or ethical convictions; the effectual type of rationality inherently counts on emotions; while traditional/conventional rationality is merely recurrent and fixed on habits. Admittedly, Weber (see: Horkheimer, 1974) purposefully classified rationality in a more complex and mixed field within the binary between feelings and reason, indicating a synergy between the two components. And indeed, I find the binary of emotion versus reason problematic in an era where emotions have entered the vernacular, and are greatly influencing political discourses. Comparing and depicting the emotional dimensions of civic engagement with the illogical, enforces a false polarity between the rational and the emotional, which is not entirely or necessarily present in the hybrid environment social media have set up for contemporary movements.

Here I discuss affect as a 'non-conscious experience of intensity' (Massumi, 2002:11), which allows feelings to be 'felt' and therefore be interpreted into emotion (Massumi, 2002; Shouse, 2005). According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), affect and emotion are not entirely the same elements and this is evident through their argument that any action is foreshadowed by affect. In their discussion they make clear the distinction between personal emotions and affect as co- and interdependent instead of each being distinctive. For them, affect is considered as an aggregate of space-time chunks in which affect is intensely contingent and linked with the ephemeral. In this formation 'some events…are regular and ordinary, whereas others…singular, marking turning points in a system's history' (Protevi, 2009, p.xvii). As I will discuss later in Chapter 4, this thrives in an environment such as Twitter, which is inherently ephemeral.

As Papacharissi argues 'emotion is subsumed within affect, and perhaps the most intense part of affect' (2015:15), but it goes further than just giving meaning to experience, as feelings do. Affect not only helps us make sense of the everyday but it also encompasses 'regimes of expressivity' linked to 'resonant wordings and diffusions of feelings/passions' (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010:8). Yet, at the same time it communicates emotions. In this context, technologies that are steered by affect, can promote networks of 'affective flows' that are created, negotiated, and modified through communication and the networks of 'the affective economy, of consumerism, branding … and more generally, culture' (Wissinger, 2007, 247). We cannot thus talk of affect as separate from the technology it is linked to (Haraway, 1991). We should instead talk about affect as being part of the flow of technologies and the one-time system of networked communication that makes the world and the events around us have meaning. Affect here gains a political character that presents social media users as emotional individuals, who can also be part of a collective and rational community (Protevi, 2009). Indeed, affect is present in many fields, constantly in fluid motion (Massumi, 2002). However, one of its most significant characteristics is that it can be expressed through language (Sedgwick, 2003).

Papacharissi (2015:24) further argues that 'networked technologies enable affective processes that reflexively drive or nullify publics', creating spaces for people with different views to find like-minded people. Scholars have argued that individuals tend to associate with people who are similar to them, and discuss this under the umbrella-concept of 'homophily' (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook, 2001:415). The notion that 'birds of a feather flock together' has been around since Aristotle and is usually observed in SMN studies that deal with gender, income, and ethnicity, cultivating a 'highly visible, oft studied network divide' (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook, 2001:420). Digital platforms such as Twitter are considered platforms that allow users to easily contribute to a collective informational

space and, regardless of its ephemeral and instantaneous qualities, it may be enabling more individuals to find a connecting space where they can meet with like-minded others (Earl and Kimport, 2011:73). Bono and Raynes-Goldie (2006) found that the friending functions of SMNs may work as an incentive for social drama, while Ellison's, Steinfield's, and Lampe's (2007) early research on Facebook argued that the platform was used to sustain or strengthen already existing offline relationships, rather than acting as a space to connect with new people. On the same lines, boyd (2006a) discovered that 'friends' on SMNs are not the same as 'friends' in the traditional sense of the word. SMNs offer *in lieu* a 'familiar' or 'intimate' space, by providing users with an imagined audience to convey behavioural models. Therefore, affective expression online, which either exists in the form of text or image, usually helps in creating and sustaining these groups (Yang, 2009).

Taking all these aspects into consideration, it could be argued that networked communities are not only maintained through their socio-political, technological, spatiotemporal, and network coordinates, as the first sections of this chapter have argued, but also through digitally empowered affective systems that encourage meaning-making and the construction of narratives (Berry et al., 2010). Current literature on affect narratives has focused on the affective shaping of narratives, sub-narratives, and counter-narratives in connection to large-scale events. This scholarship deals with how the everyday use of social media networks acts as a way of documenting and reporting the mundane while sharing information connected with breaking news, mainstream media, rumours, and misinformation (Papacharissi, 2015; Potts and Harrison, 2013; Maddock et al., 2015). Furthermore, social media tend to debunk myths and hold mainstream media accountable for wrongdoings (Maddock et al., 2015; Starbird et al, 2014). While the first analytical chapter of this thesis (Chapter 5) deals with reactions to mainstream media reports and the affective response to them in relation to OWS, the following discussion will focus on the 'intimate publics' discussion of affective communities in relation to mainstream media, This

goes contrary to the concept of breaking news that Papacharissi argues for in her book 'Affective Publics' (2015).

2.7.1 Invading the Mainstream Media Networks: seeing Affect in Action

Grasping the extent to which mainstream media influence stories online is essential to understanding social movement networked processes. I propose that the social media ecology of mainstream media on Twitter had a significant affective function and influence on how OWS was portrayed in the public domain and conceived by the wider public in 2011. Unfortunately, there is not much literature looking into how people react to mainstream media reports of social movements on Twitter. Some research has studied the methods through which media reports work, but not the reactions of audiences to media reports.

In spite of research looking into the means Twitter employs to promote content for mainstream media (Bandari, Asur, and Huberman, 2012; Greer and Ferguson, 2011), and the redefinition of production and consumption of news in a SMNs saturated world (Bruns and Highfield, 2012; Newman, Dutton, amd Blank, 2012; Newman, 2011), research related to reactions to mainstream coverage on Twitter is absent. Indeed, social media is usually perceived as a reaction to events happening in the cultural, social, and political realm, thus creating instantaneous narratives linked to mainstream media reports (Murthy, 2015). This suggests a degree of confirmation bias; as mainstream media depict events in such ways that they conform to their existing or adopted narratives. As Entman (2007) argues, the bias adopted by the media reaffirms the ways in which its access power is influencing public perceptions. In relation to this, Chapter 5 looks into the ways in which mainstream media narratives of OWS influenced people's reactions on Twitter.

Earlier research conducted by Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) has asserted that social movements need to seek media coverage in order to: first, reach

other areas, and hence 'mobilise' far away local communities to support them; second, 'validate' themselves as a movement that is important enough to attract media coverage; and third, earn a 'scope enlargement', to reach people that could have never been reached through their traditional strategies. Gitlin's (1980) study of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), also points to intentional media attention for gaining new recruits (akin to 'scope enlargement' mentioned above). This involves finding ways to 'challenge the authority of dominant institutions', by demanding for specific issues to be attended to. Again, similar to what Gamson and Wolfsfeld called 'validation' for the participants in the movement, media coverage soothed their existential angst and made them feel that they 'mattered in the world' (in Gitlin, 1980:242-243). Admittedly, Gitlin's taxonomy is broader and more inclusive since it manages to identify that the media coverage ambition of social movements goes beyond the bounds of boosting the movement's image or its geography. Likewise, Gamson and Wolfsfeld's analysis falls short when describing the emotional breadth, or boost, that mainstream media coverage fosters in the protesters, and suggests that movements are after media coverage merely because they seek to be transformed into an articulated 'brand'. Emotions and feelings related to the public and media representations of movements are now more pertinent to the discussions of contemporary protests. My argument is not that all points made by mainstream media about OWS were wrong, even though a significant percentage of those points were contentious. My point is simply that the ways in which mainstream media reported on OWS gave rise to affective or intimate narratives on Twitter and elsewhere, which unveiled the dynamic communicative and collective characteristics of OWS, and thus allowed the movement to escape being defined as yet another reactionary movement. In the next section I will explain how affect is also prevalent in the telling of the movement's story.

2.7.2 Affective Storytelling on SMNs

I argue that the affective conversations, or monologues, taking place on

Twitter may work as affective storytelling for OWS, or 'as *a democracy of emotions'* (Giddens, 199: 63). By turning to Berlant's theory, which examines the role that sentimental narratives have in forming collective action in 'intimate publics', we may elucidate the extent to which these narratives preserve the voices of those involved in the hybrid spaces of communication that OWS occupied. Therefore, the focus in this section will be on (re)telling the affective stories of the public, rather than identifying the coordinates of the affect. Again, this thesis looks into the process - *what* stories *and why* certain stories are told and shared - not into how the OWS came to be on Twitter. Focusing on the intimate storytelling processes of OWS will make the affective coordinates of the OWS network community more clear. In Berlant's words:

> […] when sentimentality meets politics personal stories tell of structural effects, but in doing so they risk thwarting the very attempt to perform rhetorically a scene of pain that must be soothed politically. Because the ideology of true feeling cannot admit the non-universality of pain, its cases of vulnerability and suffering can become all jumbled together into a scene of the generally human, and the ethical imperative toward social transformation is replaced by a passive and vaguely civic-minded ideal of compassion. The political as a place of acts oriented towards publicness becomes replaced by a world of private thoughts, leanings, and gestures projected out as an intimate public of private individuals inhabiting their own affective changes. […] Meanwhile, we usually lose the original impulse behind sentimental politics, which is to see the individual effects of mass social violence as different from the causes, which are impersonal and depersonalising. (Berlant 2008:41)

Even though in this passage Berlant refers to the second wave of feminist traditions and their emphasis on the personal becoming the political, it can also be used in cases linked to social media and social movements. The expression or just the matching of the personal with the political is often

misinterpreted as the pure work of the political. For social media network communities such as OWS, the debate about the extent to which the expression of individualised experiences spawns a passive 'civic minded ideal of compassion' is significant for qualifying OWS' ability to provide a more diverse scope of voices for social change in the social media sphere.

The question here lies in the binary of whether social media are demonstrating the original impulse behind sentimental politics or whether we are seeing mass reactions on Twitter specifically as impersonal and depersonalising. The affective extension of OWS is an important element in looking into how OWS structured itself on Twitter through meaningful individual stories and multiple personal narratives. Therefore, the significance of the technology itself is not *sui generis*, but relies extensively on the social, cultural, political and economic settings surrounding and giving rise to these demonstrations. Affective links to OWS allowed its supporters to feel and place themselves in relation to the movement. In these affective processes, OWS' supporters also produced new conceptualisations of collective identity, one which again cannot be framed in the conventional notions of collective action, but more in the notions of a fluid collective action (Kavada, 2015).

2.7.3 Building a Collective Identity

In this section I will argue that working within a duality of individual versus collective identity for contemporary social movements is a fallacy. Similar to the polarity between the rational and the emotional I talked about earlier, we should think of collective identity as both fluid and cohesive, but also as a resilient and flexible concept (Della Porta, 2005; Rupp and Taylor, 1999). In section 2.4.2, I discussed how social media have altered social movements to their core, and have shifted them from a stable collective notion to a collective action that is more fluid and multifaceted. In the process, this embeds in them a multitude of personal reasons for action. In this section, I

go back to the same point, and to Melucci (1996), to revisit the notion of social media forming a collective identity.

The process of collective identity entails a better understanding of the context and meanings of social movements that are borne in a social-media influenced ecosystem. We have indeed moved away from the notion of collective actors as the historical heroes, and therefore the notion that collective action is formed exclusively through good leadership and the 'big narratives' of individual actions of bravery (e.g. Martin Luther King or Rosa Parks). The concept of collective identity should therefore be acknowledged as the product of a multileveled collective action: not just physical on-the-ground action but also digital action and affective action. Collective action according to MeluccI (1996) is the result of purposes (purposive orientation), resources (constructed by means of social relationships within a system), and limits (opportunities and constraints). Collective action should not be defined within the constraints of values and beliefs; it should consider the interactive and negotiating relationship of the actors with the ecosystem and their own definition in connection to it. Actors construct a 'we' through the sense, the possibilities and the limits, and the environment in which the action takes place.

What Melucci (in Johnston and Klandermans, 1995:41-63) suggests is that the process of 'constructing' an action system is what defines a collective identity. Collective identity as a process includes a network of active relationships between the actors, who interact, communicate, influence each other, negotiate and make decisions. Emotional investment in the moment, and its causes is compulsory in defining 'collective identity' since it allows individuals to feel part of a group. Collective action generates symbolic directions and meanings that individuals can identify with and it entails a notion of causality and belonging in which individuals can assign the effects of their actions to themselves. Collective action, in a similar way to storytelling, allows individuals to draw links between the past and the future,

recognising the changes between then and now. Social actors enter a conflict, or fight for a social movement to maintain the identity their adversaries have denied them. Identity is increasingly recognised as socially produced. 'Identification processes shift to human action, to culture and communication, to social relations and technological systems' (Melucci in Johnston and Klandermans, 1995:50), and for that the process of collective identity is constructed in multiple steps and levels. In this way, collective identity can both be loose and multifaceted, and can allow for individual difference. It is not coherent, rigid, and homogeneous.

Movements such as the Occupy Wall Street movement depend on their definitions being multiple, diverse, and all-embracing, and can survive regardless of the existence of a definitive strong collective identity. This can instead be replaced by a notion of a collective identity, which is in constant process. By looking at collective identity as a process in OWS, we can trace how it can be fragmented but can also still be held up by its elements of *common purpose, aims, and will for social change* (Gamson, 1995; Lichterman, 1995). Following Tajfel's oft-quoted definition of identity as 'that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership' (1981: 255), I propose a conceptual move from the conventional notions of collective identity to a new notion that depends on also *sharing knowledge and values online*; not one that evades the characteristics of collective identity, but one that combines them with the fluid identity notions present in social media networks. Applied to OWS, connective action (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012) and connective identity suggest that social media communication is indicative of both the cohesion and plurality of identity concepts, which is not the case with OWS (Kavada, 2015). The logic of OWS' collective action advances instead models of information sharing that allow individuals to position themselves as present in the movement, while at the same time avoiding the distinct entanglements that form a collective identity and a clear 'we'.

Although there is no single agreed upon definition of collective identity in social movement studies, there are a number of academics whose work has tried to discuss collective identity in explicit terms. Scholars have focused on collective identity in order to unpack the ways in which the sense of cohesion that exists in affective network communities may make people act against something or bring up feelings of support (Hunt and Benford, 2004; Polletta and Jasper, 2001; Snow, 2001). This field of research examined how the emotional, social, and cultural realms influence the sense of togetherness in collective action, and has generally moved away from the restraints of mobilisation theory (see: Gamson, 1975) or clear political frameworks (see: Tarrow, 1989; McAdam, 1982). Other literature employs collective identity discussions that are not entirely focused on social movement studies but instead rely on psychological and behavioural studies (see: Simmel, 1955). Discursive signifiers of collective identity have also been considered to be central to the cohesiveness of a collective identity. For example, the 'we are the 99%' slogan for the Occupy movement was a crucial signifier of the collective notions of Occupy, because it managed to escape the 'this is what democracy looks like' of the anti-capitalist protests of the 1990s; its repetition resonated with the protesters' and supporters' beliefs. The slogan was one of the major successes of the movement, since its ambiguity facilitated a number of discourses and allowed individuals to identify with OWS through their own experiences, as I discussed in Section 1.2.2. According to Stone (2003, in Pickerill, Krinsky, and Hayes, 2016: 36) this 'ambiguity can work as the glue of politics', since it allows people to 'agree on laws and policies because they can read different meanings into the words'. Certainly, the slogan made the we-ness of the movement somehow clear, i.e. dividing the 99% of 'us', people being unequally treated, and the 1% of 'them,' the rich bankers and the establishment that takes advantage of the 1%. However, we still cannot define that we-ness through specific collective identity frames. Solidarity, we-ness, and collective agency are often structured through affective ties and emotions (Yang, 2000) that can be

transmitted through slogans. However, a slogan cannot create a collective identity just by itself. Rather, there is a whole process behind structuring and sustaining the collective notions forming a group.

Moreover, Dahlgren (2009) and Snow (2001) define collective identity as being framed by shared experiences, space, and collective action. In Snow's words, the essence of collective identity:

> […] resides in a shared sense of 'one- ness' or 'we-ness' anchored in real or imagined shared attributes and experiences among those who comprise the collectivity and in relation or contrast to one more actual or imagined sets of others. Embedded within the shared sense of we is a corresponding sense of collective agency... Thus, it can be argued that collective identity is constituted by a shared and interactive sense of 'we-ness' and collective agency.

By calling collective identity a concept 'generative of a sense of agency that can be a powerful impetus to collective action, but it functions as well […] as the constructed social object to which the movements protagonists, adversaries, and audience(s) respond', Snow suggests that 'it is questionable and unnecessary to contend that *the process is more fundamental than the product to understanding the character and functionality of collective identity'* (2001:4; emphasis added). Similarly, McDonald's approach proposes that collective identity is subjective and that we should avoid leaning on the collective identity paradigm by focusing on collective action as 'the public expression of the self' (2002: 111, 2010). By focusing on the individual's perception of collective identity, he urges researchers to 'explore what may be an emerging paradigm of contemporary social movement, one constructed in terms of fluidarity rather than solidarity, and in terms of the "public experience of self" rather than collective identity' (111). My counterargument, however, is that we should first examine the processes leading to the product. Then we can discuss how the product emerges as the

result of those processes, if necessary. In my view, we cannot look at collective identity in contemporary social movements as an entirely stand-alone product, but only as a *process*. This process is contingent on the affective storytelling I discussed earlier. Emotions and shared sentiments between OWS supporters form identity processes that depend on homophilic trends, and have a relationship with either the ideology of the movement, its values, or its aims.

For this reason, my focus here will remain on the scholarship that examines identity formation in contemporary social movements, and will draw more on new social movement theory (NSM). The starting point of this discussion hence should be the works of Alberto Melucci (1980, 1988, 1989, 1995, 1996). Melucci was influenced by the works of Alain Tourraine (1981, 1985), and promoted the idea of a collective identity that was more methodological and inclusive for 'new social movements.' Melucci argued that 'the empirical unity of a social movement should be considered as a result rather than a starting point' (Melucci 1995:43). He explored the ways in which individual beliefs and collective action could work together, by focusing on the ways in which individuals negotiate, understand, and build up their action by interacting with others. According to Melucci, the dynamic mechanisms of common language, rituals, practices and cultural artefacts, can create a collective identity that is constantly in process and exists in a cognitive or affective context which does not have to be consolidated or consistent. It can instead be constructed through interactions and can be held together through multiple and sometimes incompatible definitions.

This concept of a fluid collective identity contradicts scholarship in the area of collective action. Such scholarship often relies on strict structural and political frameworks such as Marxism, or the concept of a public sphere proposed by Habermas (1962). Indeed, Melucci's work is criticised as being based on general hypotheses and for lacking clear empirical data (Shriver et al., 2000; Gilbert, 1998). Even by recognising these positions, we cannot

ignore the importance of his work in constructing a notion of a collective identity which is not a given, thus promoting a new kind of social identity, which was later widely adapted by social movement researchers. For example, Polletta and Jasper (2001:285) discuss collective identity as formed through 'an individual's cognitive, moral and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution'. In fact, the introduction of hybrid spaces of participatory communication such as Twitter have further allowed people to feel like they are counted (Coleman, 2013), and that their ideas, thoughts, and actions can find an affective space of expression and moral identification. Kavada (2015:874), also drawing on Melucci, looks into the concept of collective identity as a process 'through which collectives form and continuously redefine themselves and their boundaries' in OWS. She too views the movement 'as a phenomenon emerging in communication,' thus offering us an 'insight into the efforts of Occupy activists to create a collective that was both inclusive of the 99% and a distinctive actor with its own identity' (872). In this thesis, I establish a distance from her, empirically and methodologically, but it is important to stress the similarities here, since she too focused on the *process*.

Along similar lines, in his work on fathers' rights groups Crowley (2008) suggested that individual actors who are part of a movement do not have to identify entirely with the movement as a whole or with its ideologies. Instead, these individuals merge around a collective identity, which is structured through a number of pluralities. It is important to stress this point here, for this thesis will focus on how different OWS supporters on Twitter do not become unquestionably and undoubtedly identified with the ideas, beliefs, or aims of the movement as a means of becoming part of a collectivity, but they rather form different narratives through a number of opinions that may clash with each other. These narratives may range from defining what the movements stands for to discussing the ways in which they should respond to police violence. Following Melucci, collective identity for OWS will be seen as a network of flowing affective relationships, embodying

their emotional engagements with the movement, which change over time, and adapt to the different stages that go along with the movement's life (1995:45). As a last point in the discussion of collective identity, it should be mentioned that in order to avoid the dilution of their collective identity, members of the movement need to realise and reconfirm their idiosyncrasies and their similarities through that process too; when ties break up, or the links of togetherness are broken or diluted, collective identity weakens and may make their aims more plausible.

2.8 Towards Stories that Matter

What has been the contribution of the three coordinates of OWS—the movement's complex socio-political context, the strong ties between social media networks and the movement, and the creation of networked affective communities—to the rise of the force field defining OWS? First, without the common 'opponent' of political and economic unrest, the wide range of Occupy protests would have little or no unity, since tensions between their ideals and their current democratic environment have defined them. Second, the persistence of social media networking capacities and the networking communication between the online and the offline spaces of OWS, have provided a critical range of traces against which new social forms of expression could be measured and through which they could together create a new networked community. And finally, OWS has exposed the potential of social media networks for raising social activism and disseminating the ideas of those on the ground and online in the form of a collective identity. This in turn has stimulated public and academic debate about the uses of social media by activists and others in this socio-political context (Jenkins, 2006). These technologies cannot substitute public space, but they can change the definition of social action, and establish new ways in which people can gather to demonstrate on the streets. I will now move into the second part of this thesis, which concerns narrative theory in the context of social movement narrative analysis, by examing how narratives can be deployed to trace OWS narratives on Twitter.

3. Theoretical framework: An approach to stories and narratives

3.1 Social Movement Storytelling

Social media have changed the way we see social movements in the same way the invention of the camera changed the way people viewed and perceived paintings. Paintings were earlier seen as part and parcel of the buildings they were placed in and painted for; as part of the interior life of the building. Together they formed the identity of the building itself: they gave to buildings a sense of idiosyncrasy and uniqueness (Berger, 1973). The individuality of every painting was an integral part of the place it was located in. Even when a painting was moved from its original location, it was always seen as just a painting in itself, nothing more. Most importantly, it could never be in two places at the same time. A photograph, however, allowed a painting to travel further than its original location and made people aware of artwork located all over the world, in settings they would possibly never be able to experience in person. Social movement scholars argue that just like paintings and their photographic representations, social media give the sense of contemporary social movements existing in two places at the same time; altering the uniqueness and originality of the movement's identity.

Indeed, the nuances forming our everyday lives changed with the introduction of new technologies such as SMNs, in a similar way to how the significance of a photograph of a painting changed the meaning of a painting more than two centuries ago. Social movements' meanings have changed with the introduction of SMNs in their processes, which have given them many meanings. Some have argued that the organisation and structure of contemporary movements are more imperative than the ways in which they influence the public realm, and as such what is now important is working out

how to structure can develop less fractured social movements, much like the ones in the past (Žižek, 2012b). I argue that social movements' changing architectures are inescapable and we now need to grasp the opportunity to look into them and into the narratives constructing them in the platforms that made them visible, such as in social media platforms. To understand the movements of this era we must first consider the fact that human beings always think, express themselves, and communicate through stories, and that the first thing one does in the face of change is to arrive at a narrative that makes sense of the events surrounding one. This is precisely what this thesis looks into: the stories people told to make sense of a movement whose story and whose meanings were attached to the use of SMNs.

This second part of the theoretical framework follows the second chapter's research inquiries into the sociocultural dimensions of OWS. This chapter will look into the narrative elements of the movement's story on Twitter, to further elaborate on the three already discussed dimensions of the OWS story: the socio-political context of the movement, its relationship with Twitter, and the networks of affect its community is based on, in the creation of a sense of collective identity. I will first go through the ways in which Twitter stories can be plotted to unpack the big story of the movement, and then I will look into the narrative elements of story, discourse, narrative, storyteller, author, time, and space to show how they can be placed into Twitter's storytelling context. At this stage, the concept of ephemerality will begin to connect to discussions from the previous chapter, leading to debates around the complications and advantages of ephemeral stories in the world of contemporary social movements. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the collective narratives constructing OWS, drawing parallels to debates on collective identity.

3.2 Everyone Knows what Stories are

To think more concretely about the construction of OWS, we need to

consider Twitter as the space in which diverse forces were brought together, and to further differentiate the forces. This will contribute to a long-standing controversy regarding the value of social media to OWS. Considering the use of Twitter during OWS, this thesis develops the following ideas. First, Twitter is increasingly evolving into a means for 'current event storytelling' (Ryan, 2004:1-40), making 'synergetic story-writing' a reality for social movements (Page and Thomas, 2011:11). Second, Twitter is merging technology with the lifeworld of OWS, allowing social movement narratives to become clearer and more visible. Analysing a mixture of OWS' cultural, personal, and collective narratives on social media, this thesis will argue for a distinctive move forward, into a new phase of digital narratology that re-examines the relationship between storytelling and social movements.

The point of this re-examination is twofold: first to examine the storytelling processes of OWS and the means by which it is narrated on Twitter through a multileveled storytelling and information transmission; and second to look at the ways in which it is influencing offline conceptions of the movement. Working with prior research emphasising the form of stories and their relevance to traditional narratives and digital context, the following sections will form a basis of the analytical chapters, which will chronicle the emerging structures of storytelling and narrative creation on Twitter based on key events of OWS' life. I will argue that to uncover the narratives of social movements we should not only listen to the grand narratives associated with them, but we should also focus on stories that differ from the dominant traditions of social movement narratives. Instead, we should examine the fragmentary and ephemeral stories that are being told in mundane spaces such as Twitter (Page, 2010; Georgakopoulou, 2007; Ochs and Capps, 2001). In Polletta's words (in Davis, 2002:35) 'stories constructed by activists […] must contend with the resonance of conventional narratives—narratives, for example that reduce protest to the ephemeral, the nonrational, and the apolitical.' Indeed, a narrative needs our participation in interpreting it and demands our effort to fill the vacuum created by the ambiguities of social

movements (Polletta in Davis, 2002:34-36; Iser, 1972;). The 'loose structure' (Oberschall, 1989) of OWS is what this section will try to unpack: a plot that evades traditional structural emploting, with a beginning, middle, and end, and instead entails multiple middles and endings.

3.3 Narratives, Stories, and Plots on Twitter

To begin thinking about how we can apply storytelling to social movement narratives, this section will: elaborate on what I mean by storytelling on social media, introduce the concept of narrative, stories, and plot in Twitter's timelines, and suggest that social media storytelling is ruled by ephemerality. This section will eventually suggest that storytelling can unveil the multi-levelled stories, and the multiple narratives of OWS, making Twitter the storytelling medium of the movement.

In 'Illuminations', Walter Benjamin seems to have prophesied a dismal future for storytelling, by arguing that 'the art of storytelling is coming to an end.' The essay goes on to suggest that,

> Less and less frequently do we encounter people with the ability to tell a tale properly. More and more often there is embarrassments all around when the wish to hear a story is expressed. It is as if something that seemed inalienable to us, the securest among our possessions, were taken from us: the ability to exchange experiences (Benjamin/Arendt, 1968:83).

According to his essay, people of the late 19th century and early 20th century had become more reluctant to tell their stories and those who were courageous enough to try could not tell a story properly. Insisting that storytelling was something that we were inherently born with, he argued that people's ability to exchange experiences was fading away. In one sense, his worries were valid: the ways in which people expressed themselves had started changing and writing had started losing the traditional form the

canon had established in the years before. Twenty years after Benjamin's death, with the narrative turn of the sixties, scholarship turned further away from conventional notions of narrative, and instead started to employ narrative theory to explain social and cultural constructs. The traditional notion of a narrative changed from a conventional story plot through which individuals were able to offer an insight into events, into a narrative that did not engage with plot anymore. Instead, it engaged with explaining and structuring processes and social structures. Martin Kreiswirth used the term 'narrative turn' to talk about the way structural narrative theories formed in the 1960s influenced the way narrative study evolved and penetrated more fields than narratology and literature (2005, in Herman, 2007:4).

The short, quick, and instant ways stories are being told and transmitted in the 21st century's fast-paced world have further changed the ways in which we tell and structure our narratives. Unlike Benjamin's prediction, it does not stop us from still telling them. Instead, Twitter has afforded people of the 21st century the ability to express their stories with (minimal) filters attached and has brought forward a new storytelling mode that is giving people the chance to express themselves freely in tweets of 140 characters at a time. Reinstating Benjamin's 'ability to exchange experiences' (1935:83), Twitter has become a new medium for people to tell their stories, so that others can read them. I argue that what makes Twitter stories unique is the way they form narratives, since Twitter as an instantaneous storytelling platform works ephemerally instead of retrospectively, helping stories to 'maintain the stability of the self and group' (Polletta in Davis, 2002:35) while making up meanings for unfolding events in real time.

In order to make this clearer, I will first discuss the concepts of narrative, story, and plot and then describe the influence of ephemerality on Twitter storytelling. The structure of a conventional narrative depends on experiences being put in order, while imposing at the same time a temporal sequence to those events. This, most of the time, suggests some initial

relationship between cause and effect (Danto, 1968). Traditional narratives thus suggest interpretations of experiences and produce meanings by laying out a series of events, or stories, in a linear plot. The events being recorded are placed in time and space, in a logical order, in such a way that an event that follows the next event seems to be the result of the sum of the prior events. This retrospective way of seeing narratives of experience forms a temporal order that is built on the basis of a series of stories with beginning, middle, and end.

Etymologically, the term 'narrative' is associated with the Latin 'gnārus' which means 'knowing'', i.e. to create a narrative is to make an inter-subjective experience knowable through communication (Prince, 1990:1-2). If we combine the first definition with Chatman's definition of a narrative as being the sum of 'events and existents in a chain of temporal causality or at least contingency' (Chatman 1978: 19), narrative becomes the manner through which one comes to a precise mode of knowledge. In Lyotard's (1984) and Barthes' (1975) eyes, narrative is the first and foremost communication tool for all languages and prevails in all cultures and all histories as the method of expressing experience; narratives 'are legitimated by the simple fact that they do what they do,' argued Lyotard (1984:23). In Lyotard's, Barthes' and Chatman's views, a narrative's role is neither to just echo what is happening, nor to simply record events. Rather, it constitutes and deciphers events in clusters comprising social, public and private aggregates, so as to make meaning out of the whole.

The French structuralists' distinction between 'story' and 'discourse' is an important element for deciphering narrative's importance. First, Gérard Genette argued that 'story' is made up of pre-verbal materials set in chronological order, and includes all the characteristics that the writer adds to the story. These include the way temporality is altered throughout the plot, how the consciousness/ideas of each character is presented, and the narrator's relationship with the story and the readers (Genette, 1972).

Seymour Chatman's 'Story and Discourse' follows the same steps and offers similar definitions for stories, suggesting that 'each narrative has two parts: a story (histoire) [that is] the content ... And a discourse (discours), that is, the expression, the means by which the content is communicated' (Chatman, 1978:19).

In this thesis therefore, there is a methodological difference between narrative and story. To put it simply, narrative is the method by which stories make sense, gain interest and grab the audience's attention. For Genette (1980:25) 'narrative refer[s] to the narrative statement, the oral or written discourse that tell of an event or series of events[…].' In Genette's words, story is 'the succession of events, real or fictitious, that are the subjects of this discourse' (1980:25). Indeed, as Genette suggets: 'Narrative [is] the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself'; 'story [is] the signified narrative content' (Genette, 1980:26). Thinking within this context, a tweet is the signifier; a tweet is a story because it can be considered as the telling of an event and part of the content that forms the micro-narratives and narratives of OWS on Twitter. By extension, the narratives, the signifiers, formed by the tweets, produce the discourse of OWS and tell the stories of the movement in compelling ways. In other words, the narratives of OWS are the medium through which the tweets gain meaning; narratives turn tweets into themes of information, into meanings for the reader. The narration of stories, through several tweets, forms the micro-narratives and narratives of the movement.

To put it in clearer terms within this thesis' framework Twitter as a mechanism can be given a discourse identity that suggests its own temporality and understandings of events. In order to decipher the events in clusters, users need to make use of the platform's features to connect to the movement (as I first discussed in Section 1.7.1). Twitter then creates the discourse that guides the audience through the story and assembles the events in intelligible plots, which in their turn create narratives. There is however, a distinction between enveloping Twitter in the framework of

technological determinism and recognising the affordances of the platform that have aided the movement to develop. Twitter was not in itself an *ex machina*. It was a medium that was part of OWS' story and amplified the movement's narratives.

Often, these plots found on Twitter are accumulated around a shared feeling, usually for or against something. A plot has 'an initial situation, a sequence leading to a change or reversal of that situation, a sequence leading to a change or reversal of that situation, and a revelation made possible by the reversal of situation (Miller, 1990:75). In Hayden White's (1981) words, narratives are described as chronicles invested with moral meaning through emplotment: all stories have a moral, and plot offers a way to unpack the events, instead of presenting them in a timely manner. By turning the focus towards the emotional dimensions of the stories shared by users on Twitter, social media narratives call into question ideas of plot, story, and narrator, common since the time of Aristotle. They achieve this by overturning the story's fixed order --of beginning, middle, end-- a story's definite scale and the conception of wholeness and unity. The story of OWS on Twitter is hence disengaged from what narratologists call 'the traditional plot'. I argue that this is happening mainly because of how Twitter narratives develop and climax: Twitter creates a story for OWS that begins with the presentation of social events, evolves through several stages of dispute and crisis, but ends with a rather permanent openness or lack of resolution, with OWS not reaching a catharsis like those in traditional story forms.

If we exclude the open-endedness of OWS' story on Twitter, its plot can be identified through the same notions that a traditional plot is structured through, since the story works with the power, if not the inescapability, of the same conventions it challenges. But its open-endedness makes the knots of its plot more entangled and makes my task of comprehensively organising the social media story of the movement even more intriguing. Taking into account that the story is told through thousands of twitterers' eyes, expressed through multiple points of view, this story demands a multifaceted

interpretation of the events it is presenting - of the reactions it pertains to, and of the narratives of which it is comprised - thus attaining a complexity that traditional storytelling media channels lack.

As Marie-Laure Ryan (2001) argues, digital technology enables a cross-disciplinary formation of narratives through interactivity, forming a digital text that 'comes to be regarded as the fulfilment of the postmodern conception of meaning' (Ryan, 2001:213). Along with genre-based, institutional, cultural, and text-specific proprieties, a cross-disciplinary exploration of Twitter may disclose the extent to which Occupy Wall Street's Twitter narratives are embedded in stories of knowing, interacting, and communicating. By capturing the essence of the interactivity of stories, OWS on Twitter implements the emergence of narratives that 'exploit the capacity of digital media', thus affording a new territory for the refinement of narrative analyses (Page and Thomas, 2011:1). Challenging the boundaries of textual, cultural, and literary systems, plot in these narratives is neither a static conception, nor a compelling representation of a place in time, but rather depends on a collection of textual and intertextual traces that surrender to dynamic Twitter timelines. Comments, personal stories and news, are all merged into an echo of digital stories that share the same experience, but report it from different perspectives through multiple stories. I argue here that the meaning of the OWS narrative consists of multiple, fluid, and ambiguous narratives, which are transitory and exist only briefly on Twitter's timeline, before disappearing under other flaring stories on Twitter.

Storytelling is likely to be one of the most compelling ways activists and their supporters express their feelings in connection to social movements. However, there has been a gap in the literature about social movements, where theorists ignore the importance of outrage, anger, and love in the construction and coherence of a movement (except works by Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2000; Gamson, 1992; Benford and Hunt, 1992a). Narratives of past experiences, which can link to what we experience now, afford us with the empathy and the emotions we need to connect with what

is happening around us. Twitter can be the tool through which we can trace the plot of these feelings as 'part and parcel' of a protest 'culture's mythology' such as OWS' (Sarbin, 1995:217; Jasper, 1997). Semantic analysis is thought of as an effective tool for researchers who look into the dialectical ways users communicate online, unpacking how online/social media communication footprints can pan out parts of the digital social world (Blackburn, Brody, and LeFebvre, 2014; Goode and Robinson, 2013; Tausczik and Pennebaker, 2010). Semantic analysis might look like the obvious answer here, but sentiment analysis is not yet at a stage where it can configure the emotional dimensions of social movements. A more thorough and discursive study of the movement's narratives is required to unveil the dynamics of OWS on Twitter.

Twitter at the same time appoints an interactive role to the users who use the platform to communicate and be part of the OWS story, using their shared feeling as 'bridges between their online and offline experiences' that allow for 'a collaborative construction of a metacommentary' in the online Twitter discourse (Page and Thomas, 2011:13). This process can be considered as a pluralised way of storytelling: each user sends, receives and remixes information, thus creating a vast network of text that manifests itself during the on-the-ground protests. The text here becomes a hostage of what Barthes named '*jouissance*' (1973). Twitter's text thus becomes 'that space where no language has a hold over any other, where languages circulate' (Barthes, 1975:251). Independent from time, place situation, purpose and specific audience, Twitter becomes an arena of storytelling production. This concept is something Couldry (2008) touches upon when discussing digital storytelling as an enabler of social change. However, here I have made a deliberate choice not to review Couldry's (2008) work on digital storytelling, since it has been greatly contextualised within discussions of mediatisation. Couldry's assertion that instead of being disruptive, digital storytelling will become normalised, a means of preserving power differentials by dominant social actors, is nonetheless a point that needs to be addressed, especially in

the context of the proliferation of so-called ‘fake news’ benefitting reactionary politics. The appropriation of social media storytelling by Donald Trump and his campaign in 2016 has shown signs of success since Trump has managed to even derail policy discussions into accusatory empty discussions against his opponent, Hilary Clinton. He has achieved this by creating reactionary stories on Twitter. We hence have to be careful when defining the use of ‘social media storytelling’ as the solution to any social issue, action, or discussion. Twitter’s unique features of always-on, lightweight scripting, and portable back-end interface allow it to provide steady, extended feeds of the an unravelling story as it happens, through a plot that surrenders itself to the dimensions that structure the event. These form ephemeral narratives, which at times might rely on misinformation.

Following Espen Aarseth’s argument that ‘there is no computer medium with one set of fixed capabilities’ (Aarseth, 1997: 46) I suggest that Twitter can go beyond its capabilities as a digital platform and can transform the realms of communication for contemporary social movements, in terms of their strategy and their transmission of information. By employing the features of Twitter in order to create the movement’s Twitter story, a multi-layered investigation of multiple narratives, meanings and identities emerges, which follows a polysemic model. In my view, OWS’ multi-layers can be best conceptualised through its in-between hybrid space, where the fragments of its two separate dimensions meet, creating a third space of exploration. This storyworld is comprised of micro-narratives, where the movement’s multiple meanings, identities, and relationships are constructed. The complete story of OWS in this context may then be regarded as one that will penetrate the realm of social expression and enter into a modern re-amalgamation of human expression, under yet another body that structures cultural stories: social media storytelling.

3.4 Narrative Elements: Time and Space

In order to present more clearly the different influences on the interactivity

between structure, authority, and textuality in this SMN narrative, the interconnection between these elements on Twitter will now be reviewed more closely. I will start the exploration of these elements through the two concepts I have talked about extensively in the spatiotemporal section of the first half of this chapter (see sections under 1.7), but by placing them in the context of a narrative function. I will, however, give more weight to the importance of ephemerality as a narrative function of Twitter to support my discussion earlier in the literature review.

Marie-Laure Ryan argues that each 'narrative medium' has a 'unique combination of features' (Ryan 2004: 35), among which are the ways in which it uses space and time, the senses it stimulates, the technological and material grounds of its work, and the cultural context for producing and disseminating the stories it represents. Calling such narratives multimodal — in terms of invoking a number of our senses (touch, sight, hearing) and semiotic paths (text, photos, video) — allows their stories to move from the conventional idea of a narrative, towards a narrative where interaction with millions of stories is unavoidable and unconditional. Fragile and uncovered, the constant development of stories on the social media space of Twitter, for example, marks the structure of OWS as a synthesis of the whole, 'distributed amongst different substances' (Barthes, 1977:83). Moving beyond Manovich's sense of a multimedia narrative, which is 'often in part automatically assembled by a computer' (2001:1), the capacity of Twitter as 'a real-time information network that connects you to the latest stories, ideas, opinions and news about what you find interesting' creates a process through which we can collect the tweets that built the OWS narratives.[7] Looking at OWS through time as a spatial object constructed and elicited within Twitter, parallel and expanded narratives are introduced.

Time melds together with space and flows into it, forming the path over which OWS develops. Digital space creates a chronotope, literally meaning

[7] Twitter, https://about.twitter.com [accessed 25 June 2013].

'timespace'—a Bakhtinian concept that describes the underlying connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that can express the spatiotemporal character of OWS on Twitter (Bakhtin, 1975). Far is near: news from the Occupy Wall Street movement is a Twitter stream away, on a smartphone application, whether I am in London or New York. In this digital chronotope, spatial and temporal signs melt together into one carefully calculated, solid whole. Time, as it was, becomes denser and defined; at the same time, space is loaded and becomes charged and susceptible to the changes of time, plot, and story (Bakhtin, 1975:1994:84-85).

The significance of the chronotope is essential to the meaning of the narrative: 'the chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied. It can be said without qualification that to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative' (Bakhtin, 1981:434). Typically, the main function of this time-space combination is to coordinate the events of the story by expressing their inseparability in space and time. Through the concept of a chronotope we can then trace and see the timelines of stories such as OWS' on Twitter in such a way that it 'makes narrative events concrete, makes them take on flesh, causes blood to flow in their veins' (Bakhtin, 1994:85). Time becomes denser and clearer, as evidenced through the timestamps on each tweet on the timeline. Meanwhile, space becomes loaded and receptive to the developments of time and plot, since it repositions itself constantly following Twitter's timeline flow, which shows up in reverse chronological order.

We are therefore placed in a space where intertextuality governs the meaning of the story itself, and where each story becomes part of a narrative or of multiple narratives. Julia Kristeva promoted the poststructuralist literary theory of intertextuality in the late 1960s, and it has a number of definitions and uses in literary and cultural analysis. It substantially argues that 'every text has its meaning...in relation to other texts' (Allen, 2011:6). According to it, all discourses and artefacts belong to a complex web of interconnected meanings and messages (Kristeva, 2002). Similar to Barthes, who calls the

text ‘a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture’ (1967:4), Twitter narratives combine different stories to create a bigger one. Originating from Bakhtin’s conceptualisation of *heteroglossia*, intertextuality advocates that ‘all utterances are dialogic, their meaning and logic dependent upon what has previously been said and how they will be received by others’ (Allen, 2011:19). This viewpoint endorses polyphony of discursive voices in which no single voice can be impartially separated from the rest.

There is a notable significance in using these literary concepts of polyphony and intertextuality when talking about Twitter’s influence on and relationship with OWS. Through them, Twitter begins to epitomise an intertextual network of opinions and ideas, where each tweet is connected with another, whether written in regards to a protest event or to another’s tweet. A tweet cannot exist in isolation because each can be classified and aggregated through its keyword reference (Zappavigna, 2011). The polyphony of people that compete in defending their ideas and perspectives on Twitter have replaced the top-down distribution of information that came from traditional media some years ago. This polyphony is distinguished from and classified into specific searchable keywords that elevate commonality and identification between members, who are discussing the same issues whilst still encouraging dissent and debate.

3.4.1 The Commentary Pit: Ephemerality in a Constant Present

Twitter’s timeline is also characterised by its speed and ephemerality. The rigidity between experiencing an event and the online culture of always-being-online—commenting on events happening in the world just for the sake of posting one’s opinion and adding to the sea of reactions on social media—creates a different sense of narrative temporality. I argue that this ‘commentary pit’ is the result of social media’s always-on characteristic, which not only allows users to remain online and connected to people throughout the world at all hours, but also invites them to add their comments to on-going events quickly and at any time. Indeed, this pit is

further empowered by social media's functions such as hashtags, which categorise tweets and statuses that talk about the same subject, or trending topics, which are created themes based on the amount of talk a subject gets on social media at a given moment in time.

What happens though to stories written in the social media space of an endless commenting pit, whose timelines are so fleeting that everything surrounding them feels fluid? Stories have been traditionally considered part of the times they were written in, as much as a representation of the social and cultural conditions under which they were written. What usually made them unique was the fact that they were written on paper, which gave readers the opportunity to visit and revisit the story, rethink it, decontextualize it or reconceptualise it better. By refusing the permanence of the words on the page, stories on Twitter become temporary. They form 'a radical departure' from what we knew as traditional storytelling and of well thought-through commentary (Jurgenson, 2013). In a world that lives in an everlasting present, a tweet, link or Facebook status update does not feel like it has the same effect, weight, or impact as a text. Indeed, it affords a responsibility to its author, just as paper edition texts do.

In a social media environment like Twitter's, the ephemerality of a constantly expanding timeline cannot be seized as a comprehensive whole by and of itself. SMNs have formed authors who see the present as an already fleeting past, in which the hype of current events may stand as an obstacle to understanding momentous events happening before them. Reacting fast to current events and adding to the commentary pit sometimes overpowers the significance of the events taking place. Because tweets are meant to be elusive, not to be collected or archived, tweeting feels more like everyday life—ambiguous, transitory, ephemeral—and less like a true, compact story. Writing the present as an imminent future grants social media stories of social movements with a character that is not concerned with the future or the past, but rather is invested solely in the present.

Twitter is a space that is built for the fast consumption and quick dismissal of information. Thus, all information posted there becomes insignificant with the passing of time. Sacasas, in this respect, writes 'gigabytes and terabytes of digital memories will not make us care more about those memories, they will make us care less' (2013). Even social movements themselves have started defining themselves and their success in terms of actions that can be quantified as numbers of tweets and retweets, numbers of views on YouTube and Instagram. We can assume that this inclination towards emphasising the quantity over quality of stories will only grow as we move further into the era of big data (Crawford, 2013). All of this points towards a need to find a methodical approach, which can evaluate what 'counts' as social movement stories. SMNs based their existence on the importance of everyone contributing to a collective pit of commentary, but most of the time the effect of this multiplicity of voices has been limited to the mundane. Here lies an imbalance between the affordances of Twitter and the meaning it produces, since in spite of all the engagement and activity on the platform, most of the tweets disappear down the timeline, unnoticed.

There is, however, meaning in observing how this ephemerality develops and informs narratives on Twitter. The temporary documentation of current events on Twitter timelines strengthens the importance ephemerality has on our lives. By using an ephemeral space to tell the story of a social movement as it unravels, we can uncover the significance and the meaning of the present in social movements, a present in which 'the circulation of digital data produces not copies, but are originals' (Groys, 2013). This thesis focuses on tracing how specific events were told through ephemeral stories, by working backwards and bringing those stories together, creating and piecing together the narratives of OWS.

3.5 Narrative Elements: the #OWS Narrator

By diagnosing several roles Twitter needs to fill, following reader-response theorists, this thesis has proposed that we should look into narratives,

stories, and plots in a new light, through a timespace that is governed by ephemeral processes. This section will argue that there is no simple answer to the question of the narrator. What is certain though is that the means of tale telling and the ways and conventions of narrativising contemporary life need to be untapped. I argue that OWS' narratives can be neatly divided into episodes that relate to its various stages. Thanks to the organisation of Twitter content through hashtags, the reader can bring a magnifying glass to specific parts of the story without losing sight of the whole. This is the main reason scholars such as Ryan (2004:28) and Georgakopoulou (2007) point to a clear distinction between conventions of reading print narratives and reading digital stories. Digital stories that are told using the functions of hypertextual structures, while print narratives are typically read from a series of consecutive pages whose sequence is determined by the author. Meanwhile, the *lexias* of SMN narratives—each tweet, in our case—is navigated via hashtags and the timeline features of Twitter, which are mostly dependent on the time the tweets were tweeted.

The first users tweeting about a movement or an event are the first who choose the hashtags linked to the story. These hashtags usually indicate the date of the events or the city they take place in, and ask for those commenting and adding to the story to use them too. For example, the hashtag #15M indicated the 15th of May protests of the Indignados in Madrid; while the hashtag #syntagma referred to the protests in the Syntagma square in Athens in 2011. In the same way, the #OWS hashtag, referred to the place the protest took place—Wall Street—and indicated the occupation of that specific area. Hashtags present the tweets in a reverse chronological order, from the newest to the oldest, presenting the story in a specific time-stamped system that gives a sense of continuity that holds the whole together and makes the story flow.[8] While the puzzle of meaning for a text on

[8] In a newer version of Twitter, hashtags present top tweets first and then the tweets according to the time they were tweeted. Top tweets are the ones retweeted and favourited the most under the

a page needs nothing more than an encounter between the story and the reader's imagination, the digital text of Twitter relies on the guiding forces of the hashtags to make sense (Walker, 2005:34; Aaresth, 1997). Hashtags 'highlight the character of the platform as a social awareness stream' argues Papacharissi (2012:3), as they are suggestive of folksonomies tagged by keyword.

Indeed, the #OWS hashtag was used most distinctively to transmit online what was happening during the on-the-ground protests at Wall Street, and to gather the tweets concerning the movement together in a reverse chronological order. Scholars have referred to these tagging processes in different ways, either as ethnoclassification (Merholz, 2004; Walker, 2005), community cataloguing (Chun and Jenkins, 2016), and social classification (Furner and Tennis, 2006; Landbeck, 2007). Defining what the term 'folksonomy' entails is not clear, but in general terms it has to do with sociability, participation, and synergy (Vander Wal, 2005b; Weinberger, 2006). This process, of consolidating numerous lexias/tweets/stories together, creates narrative principles that characterise Twitter's timeline as a synergetic construction of events through smaller fragmented narratives. The plot shifts from #OWS as a main narrator to secondary narrators. For example: #occupywallst, #occupy. With each of these reading tropes the storyworld extends and discloses more details for the movement. As different narrators tune in to develop the story at different points and times, their modes of action become more influential in shaping the telling of the movement's story.

The reader's familiarity with how the texts are organised on Twitter, through hashtags in these textual systems, leads to confident readings. These readings enable the acknowledgement of narrativity, where the conditions involved in piecing the stories together make up new narrative formations.

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hashtag. The second method, All Tweets, is the normal navigation through all tweets tweeted under the hashtag, based on chronological order.

Outlining narratives in this way can be described as being akin to listening to music. In Barthesian terms, Twitter's timeline can be compared to a collection of puzzles and actions that are the lines of melody, guiding us further into the story, fusing together in rhythms and patterns (Barthes, 1971:5-14). Similarly, John Halloway, in his discussion of the 'Decameron,' suggests that as we move deeper into a story. Each new phase is defined as an updated composition of the complete sequence up to that point, indicating amended expectations of the outcome. Such narratives engage numerous channels of communication, not least those between readers, authors, characters and narrators (Wolfgang, 1978:50-69). By analysing the story's structure from the reader's point of view, Halloway believes we can record the dynamic element of narrative development and illustrate that meaning as something the readers, and in our case the users, produce, rather than seeing it as a product that already exists and that we try to obtain.

3.6 Narrative Elements: the Storyteller, the Reader, and the Author

Moving along the same lines as the previous section, this section will briefly advance three more elements of narrative formation: the storyteller, the reader, and the author. The aim is: to cover all the structural elements of Twitter narratives, in order to make clearer how they are structured on Twitter; to explore what the differences between traditional narrative concepts and social media narrative concepts are; and to examine how the latter can be considered as a new form of storytelling. In a modern notion of a storytelling medium, Twitter assumes the role of the telling platform and transmits the story to the audience. Thus, it resurrects Walter Benjamin's storyteller identity. Indeed, the storyteller tells 'what he tells from experience—his own or reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those listening to his tale' (Benjamin, 1968:87). In this sense, OWS' story on Twitter is not merely concerned with a bare reality of events, objects or details, but with a human reality that draws on interpretation. As sociolinguistic theories suggest, narrative interaction can be distinguished as

interpersonally motivated and intensely formed by its social context (Georgakopoulou, 2007). The aim here is then to treat the literary product of OWS on Twitter as the primary source for putting the story together, and the imagery of the series of events presented through tweets as a means of rounding the understanding of this social story. If Twitter allows the capturing of those moments that would otherwise be repressed, or forgotten to some extent, then the structure of the platform itself allows us to return to that event and analyse the narratives structuring it at the time it was developed: as long as Twitter's service allows the collection of tweets. Considering the genealogy of Twitter as archival, the focus will be on the mechanisms that allow the reproduction of events within the medium itself, instead of assigning Twitter agency and thus falling into the trap of technological determinism.

Twitter offers the opportunity to users to share the story as it happens, drawing on numerous semiotic devices. They can add to the story as frequently as needed (tweet), and thus this allows a huge number of users to talk about events happening whilst (re)embedding content through (re)tweeting and favouring tweets. This results in a collage of tweets, photos, experiences and facts, so that Twitter proposes a postmodern conception of social movements' stories, as a site of multiple expanding narratives. A shift occurs from the ordinary story to an uncanny experience of retelling and restructuring. It is here that it becomes more apparent that the movement's narrative structures bend towards a 'création par bricolage' (Bastide, 1970: 65-108; Levi-Strausse, 1962). Turkle translates it as 'tinkering' (1997:50-73) and describes *bricolage* as a bottom-up procedure, where the writer starts with a given idea and then breaks it down into different components by combining seemingly autonomous pieces ('objets trouvés'). What emerges then is a product whose shape and meanings derive from the linking process. The result is a collage of diverse elements, similar to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari concept of 'machinic assemblage' (1987:332). This fragmented bottom-up structure and the compelling reshaping of the text with every new

reading sets up a metaphor for the conception of the OWS narrative as a site of multiple, conflicting, and unpredictable meanings. Twitter thus becomes the metaphor for a Lyotardian 'postmodern condition' in which grand narratives have been replaced by 'little stories' (Gaggi, 1997:122). The story, divided into tweets of varied content, as a bricolage of reports, documented little stories, biographical or autobiographical traces, photos and links, provides a telling of events, such as protests, through digital means. By calling for a cautious restoration of the narratives that drift through the development of a specific story on Twitter — in our case the OWS story — its production becomes a piece of an artfully drawn text.

As first discussed by Barthes in his essay 'La Mort de l'auteur' (1967:491), this 'bricolage' storytelling process makes the need to distinguish this kind of reading more pressing, since it depends on the ever-changing roles of author-reader and text-reader. As conventional notions of authorship change, the way we recognise readership and authorship and the purposes they serve will have to change too. In an era where the internet allows everyone to publish their own stories, ideas, and opinions freely and instantly, I shift my attention from the traditional and constrained definitions of authors and publishers to users. Authorship is defined through different qualities on social media networks, since it embodies a collaborative character. The author/user is creating a work as part of a community with sometimes 'unidentifiable contributors and supporters' (Lawrence, 2008:92). In the SMN culture of Twitter, as users with their content progressively gain the capacity to contribute to the collective pool of information and knowledge—either through collaborative or autonomous production, expressed in original or retweeted form—the authorial role becomes a manifold entity too.

This thesis follows the same route as Foucault in his criticism of the concept and authority of the author, where he attacks four distinct concepts of authorship (1969). Foucault's challenge begins from the psychological idea of the author, moves to the idea of authorial intention, then to the historical author as the 'origin' of the work, and finally it opposes the author-function

as the core of meaning. He argues that it is essentially the extension of the reader's need to find a semantic axis through which one can make meaning out of the text. What Foucault offers as a substitution is a radical conception of meaning, where the author/work becomes 'a fluctuating function always interacting with other functions in the larger discursive field' (Foucault, 2002:16). Similarly, Twitter's content as the story of the movement passes to the reader and redoubles OWS' narratives in the digital social space. Twitter, instead of being centralised and controlled, becomes instead a greatly fluctuating, decentralised, uncontrolled, peer-to-peer environment, which mixes the voices of its users and authors of its stories, in order to keep their content on parallel tracks. Twitter holds the roles of both the score and the machine at the same time: it becomes both the storyteller and the digital container of the story. It creates a substantial foundation that stands as a real and present threat to the traditional authorial role, thus challenging the way we both experience and create narrative content. This platform creates a new author-text-reader hybrid, inviting the user who is simultaneously the reader, to become a co-author of OWS' story. Differentiating between these categories of narrative entities that a user may possess is not simple.

The narrative of OWS produced on Twitter demands a different kind of study, one that can demonstrate how the story's meaning springs out of our ways of reading its narratives. Narratological approaches stress the complexity of these concepts and introduce some formal features of this digital interaction. Walker (2003) places users as external or internal to the story, while Ryan (2006) divides the interaction between the users and the text into two categories, calling the first 'exploratory' and the second 'ontological' interaction. Textual authority and impact on the narrative content distinguish these two kinds of interactions, indicating a differentiation between users who are external and stand outside the text, who navigate but do not alter narrative content (exploratory interaction); and users who are internal to the story, who change or devise content, and who even participate as characters within the story itself (ontological interaction) (Ryan, 2006; Walker, 2005).

Both of their inquiries amount to the possibility of creating genuinely narrative content in an interactive environment.

When examining the interactive properties of OWS' narratives, we see that the user's role can be both internal and external to the story. Some users are immersed in the story as active demonstrators and/or organisers, as active transmitters of information; these are the ones that have the ability to move the storyline further by reporting on the events, asking for any involvement or by just letting people know how the on-the-ground actions are evolving and developing. This group of users/authors have an extensive impact on the developing of the SMN story of OWS. The retweeting, favouring, liking, sharing, and commenting actions allow them to have a form of control over the transmission and popularity of the story, stressing the significance of the social community in which the narrative is situated. The users of the second category do not participate as characters in the unfolding of the events; they are the so-called 'lurkers' of SMNs, who just read instead of participating in the discussions online. For these users, the SMN story transmits a panorama-like picture of the events. They sit in a peripheral inactivity, around which the panorama develops while events, expressions, and actions unravel, leaving these readers with limited authority.

I would suggest that a third kind of user exists on Twitter: one that is simultaneously internal and external. This is the user who has just enough power to comment and express opinion on the events part of OWS, but who does not take part in the on-the-ground protests, the organisation of the movement or its actions. This is a user-reader who takes up the responsibility of retweeting, quoting and remixing the tweets of the users who are actively participating either on-the-ground or digitally. These user-readers, functioning as small nodes, transmit the story further, making information more popular, further sending and embedding it within different timelines and demographics. These small nodes are considered to be as essential and as significant to OWS as the users who pick up the role of tweeting constantly about the events on the ground.

3.7 From Small Stories, Big Stories Grow

The OWS text under the specific context of the #OWS hashtag, is built by thousands of readers, authors, characters and dozens of narrators (the hashtags). Since these all work together, the ramifications of the ties and the distances between these entities are diverse. In one way or another, these ramifications and these distances regulate the approach in which certain narratives become the personification of the movement and others are rejected in the course of OWS' story (McQuillan, 2000:101). The meticulous piecing together of the stories and their relationships through the medium, can restore the story's significance based on the theory of multiple authors existing in the same space through a long period of time. Thus, the telling of the OWS' story becomes 'a continuing state of incipient talk' (Schegloff, 1973:325), where the structures of the story and its contextual practices identify it as a shared story with a distinctive narrative mode, built through multiple narratives. This thesis, then, embodies the general in the particular, combining the advantages of the narrative mode's edges. It presents the important theme of OWS in a wealth of meaningful detail, and at the same time grants and acts out the feelings, thoughts, and concerns of the users of the platforms by focusing on the narratives they tell. Creating a framework within the reach of any user, where the human urge for personal and collective transcendence becomes possible, Twitter as the storytelling machine invites users to actively explore and add to the story anytime they feel like it.

Rethinking OWS in terms of narratology, interactivity, and intertextuality, this thesis highlights the influence of digital culture on OWS. My interest does not lie in defending the commonplace observations of digital culture, but rather in integrating them within the context of storytelling and pinpointing their cultural value. Indeed, the important question regarding social media and OWS is not just around the connections between the two, but is also whether to indicate if there is anything implicit in their digital representation that makes their expression, representation, and structure compelling as a social

or cultural value. Spanning from Twitter to the telling practices and the user's role, interactivity is discursively the main concern in solving the narrative puzzle of this story. As McLellan, in a different context, has claimed: 'the most remarkable feature of the electronic narrative is its connection with an audience' (1997:99).

I have argued that the importance of Twitter and of other SMN technologies is not entirely technological. SMNs are by no means defined as a sole technological device or as a precise collection of signifiers attached to one device; instead they are described as a new means of communication and information transmission that (un)cover the world and events such as the Occupy Wall Street movement and its narratives. Within such platforms, where social and cultural dissemination becomes feasible, and the actual level of sharing practices is culturally driven and cross-culturally manifold, 'the rise of universality [comes] out of a particular lifeworld' (Žižek, 2008:129) and the capacity of a digitally interactive environment fulfils the double function of conjoining the culture of the world's stories while transcending current events in a common space. This thesis traces the interactive story of OWS by unpacking the dominant Twitter narratives that structured it, embracing the technological background of the 21st century's social life. Creating communities with common identities and demands, but without endorsing any political party, the OWS rises as a collection of stories, which explicitly demonstrates that 'technology is gradually becoming a second nature, a territory both external and internalised, and an object of desire.' Through the story itself, we do not 'need to make it transparent any longer, simply because it is not felt to be in contradiction to the "authenticity"'(Erkki, 1995:159). Twitter, to some extent, produces and reproduces, stores away and conveys the movement's narratives in a stable but also situation-transcendent space where they are transmitted globally through a new form of storytelling. 'Hypermedia fiction and digital narratives … will morph and evolve during the years', writes Douglas.

> What will not change are the things that have always

> engaged us: the strings of cause and effect; generalisations about character and motivation we accrue from our study of outward dress, manner, tics; the dense wave of micro- and macroplots; and, always, underlying all of it, words, words, words. (Douglas 2002:171).

3.8 The Narrative Matters

Twitter is not a storytelling machine that automatically generates stories but rather is a platform for creating, disseminating and archiving narrative fragments that can be considered to be pieces of a bigger story. By examining how a computer-assisted analysis of Twitter can afford us with new means for exploring and theoretically arguing for new kind of digital narratives, this thesis may unsettle or complicate traditional concepts of narrative concepts. It is still the job of the researcher to construct the bigger story. As I argue in the methodology chapter that follows, Twitter's capacity as a storyteller lies as much in the future as in the present: OWS' narratives are only put together in the years following the events they speak of, and that process includes linking events through time and multiple narrative spaces. It is only after OWS began to settle down and began 'fading away' that I was able to look back at what Twitter had collected. The patterns the movement had developed and the ways in which its story changed over time transformed its narratives and the movement along with them. If we think about the protesters and the movement's supporters as the digital characters of our story, and Twitter as the storytelling platform, we find new ways to explore how the movement is viewed and regarded through personal stories and collective narratives.

This research is not just about social media. Placed within an innovative and cutting edge area of social and cultural research, in the context of what Savage and Burrows (2007: 886) call the 'crisis of empirical sociology', my research generates and brings to light new inquiries for social scholarship. In agreement with a large segment of research that is moving towards the study

of web data, or big data, this project seeks to contribute to social research something that still has not been made clear: a methodological and conceptual outlook for social research that goes hand in hand with internet research. This thesis adopts an approach that aims to advance internet research further than the fields of online culture and virtual worlds, by extending into a field where the interplay between the online and the offline is considered a social research method. As Castells' et. al. Argue (2007:246) assert: 'technology does not determine society: it is society, and can only be understood in social terms as a social practice. This means that the uses of wireless communication are fundamentally shaped and modified by people and organisations, on the basis of their interest, values, habits, and projects'. Technologies are contributing to the study of social practices something unique that affords us with the chance to compare and contrast offline networks with online networks, through the combination of empirical research methods and curated datasets (Procter, Viz, and Voss, 2013:16).

Through its proposed mixed methodology, this project has the potential to redesign the field of narrative investigation. First, by including social media narratives, its theoretical framework can be adapted to re-determine the breadth of narrative structures. At the same time, the analysis of the digital archive can generate new research hypotheses regarding which properties and patterns are attached to such narratives, and can illustrate the structural and functional links between social media stories and social movements. Finally, interviews conducted with OWS members add non-SMN personal narratives to the story and establish connections with social media, adding to the structural composition of the story and the movement, and allowing me to compare and contrast the information gathered from inside and outside of the digital narrative space (Rogers, 2013:7-13).

4. Conceptual and Methodological Framework

4.1 Introduction: What is this story about?

This chapter's scope is to illustrate the conceptual framework of this thesis and to define and describe the method I used to analyse Twitter data and interview data to look into the case of OWS. Here, I also introduce Narrative Thematic Analysis (NTA) as a framework approach that brings together quantitative and the qualitative discussions concerning social data through the use of narrative analysis. The sections that follow are both reflective and analytical, and form the core of the conceptual and methodological framework of my research.

This thesis stems from my past interest in digital storytelling. This interest was aroused during my undergraduate and Masters programmes in English literature, and was expressed in respective dissertations exploring blogs as life stories and 'metafictional' stories in social media networks (SMNs). As a Greek Cypriot studying in London and someone with an interest in how stories are formed in the digital world, I became more interested in the intersections between social media and social movements, following the 2008 riots in Greece. The protests, looting and demonstrations, following the death of a 15-year-old student after a police shooting in December 2011 in central Athens, escalated into full-scale violence from both the demonstrators and the police. This caused a massive and critical reaction by the relatively small Greek Twitter community and drew attention worldwide. Twitter's penetration in Greece at the time was very low. Yet, in spite of its small community size, the shooting event shocked everyone and brought to the surface dynamics and frustrations in the telling of the events on Twitter that were not apparent to me earlier. Twitter helped me feel the influence and importance of the events taking place in Greece while being at a distance, and it was this feeling of immediacy and scale that directed my

research interest in Occupy.

The argument developed in the previous chapter was that Twitter as a storytelling platform expands and enhances the representation of the Occupy Wall Street movement, by providing a hybrid interactive narrative space for its supporters to be expressed as authors, readers, and characters in the OWS story. Analysis of this social media storytelling space is further supported in this thesis by the addition of one offline narrative space that offers more data relevant to the investigation of the movement: personal stories based on interviews with OWS protesters and activists. Drawing on notions from the sphere of social media research, I examine the modal, generic and medial dimensions of the OWS story, through Twitter, and support my arguments and results with material from the interviews. In this way, the dominant narratives[9] of OWS will be explored in a context that is interdisciplinary and infused with narrative, social, and cultural theories, where the distinctiveness of the movement and the uniqueness of its social media representation come together in a whole story.

Placing this exploration in a methodological context alongside the NTA approach, where other components of the story can be quantitatively harvested and analysed with the help of computerised tools, I investigate the ways in which online communication evolved to affect offline routines. I thus create a paradigmatic shift, which extends traditional social movement narrative notions, by fleshing out how media technology may change one of the oldest and most important forms of human expression: the act of storytelling. This framework is a paradigmatic shift for two reasons:

1. It combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches, and
2. It proposes, and illustrates, that we can trace a movement's development, dynamics, and processes through storytelling. These two

[9] Here, I define the 'dominant' narratives as the narratives that showed up the most during the discourse analysis of the Twitter content. Certainly smaller narratives could have also been included here, but the lack of space and time did not allow me to expand on them.

elements unveil characteristics of a social-media immersed movement, which other approaches such as network analysis, sentiment analysis, or comparative analysis, cannot trace.

Researching and analysing the experiences of the activists who were involved with the movement on the ground, and the movement's supporters on Twitter, this research adds to further understandings of how SMNs are used within social movements and provides insights into the ways in which the OWS story is represented online. The thesis focuses on one central research question: *How does a movement express its story through interwoven narratives on Twitter, and what does the expression of these stories and the responses of participants, activists, and adversaries to key events tell us about the movement?*

To answer this question, I deploy NTA as a framework for discourse analysis, which links quantitative and qualitative discussions together in one model. Even though NTA can be deployed to analyse and construct text datasets of any size, this frame was formed with the susceptibilities of discourse analysis in the era of Big Data in mind. I introduce NTA as a mixed-methods approach, which draws out issues related to big textual corpora, the sizes of which make them impractical for close reading. NTA informs digital data research by applying a bottom-up perspective to the empirical phenomenon under investigation, by forming narratives through tweets. This perspective refines social movement and narrative concepts, reconstructs meanings, and finally proposes a new way of looking at contemporary movements: through their representation on Twitter as narratives.

By using NTA, my goal is to avoid reducing big texts to numbers, as often is the case with social media data such as frame analysis, network analysis,

textual analysis, or connected concept analysis[10]. Instead of creating networks, or counting popular words or groups of words, I pick on narrative analysis to interpret:

1. Tweets as stories,
2. Themes of stories as micro-narratives, and
3. Sets of micro-narratives as narratives.

The result—a number of narratives structuring OWS' story on Twitter—accommodates the demand for qualitative frames that can uphold social media data analysis.

This thesis focuses on the analysis of originally posted #OWS hashtagged tweets, tweeted during the last forty days[11] of the movement on the ground, to bring out four of the dominant narratives of the movement's story on Twitter:

1. Its media ecology narrative that went against mainstream media representation of the movement and towards social media's use (Chapter 5);
2. The Twitter abuse narrative against the movement (Chapter 6);
3. The narrative against violence emerging from the NYPD (Chapter 7), and
4. The collective identity narrative of the movement (Chapter 8).

Taking NTA into account, this thesis emphasises the importance of social movement narrative research that moves beyond formalist bounds, and towards the analysis of new forms of narratives that deal with social media generated texts. The real challenge, however, was to find techniques to structure this entwined methodology. In what follows, I discuss the strategies deployed in approaching the research field, and I elaborate on how a

[10] Even though NTA is highly influenced by connected concept analysis, it avoids its reliance on interpreting data through numbers (Lindgren, 2016)

[11] I focus on the last 40 days of the movement in order to: make it easier for me to analyse, compare and contrast the day-by-day data, and focus on the days that led to the eviction of the movement from Zuccotti Park, which can be considered as the climax of the movement's story.

combination of a bottom-up partly quantitative and largely qualitative approach (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) provides a fruitful new means of narrative analysis, which can form the basis for re-evaluating foundational concepts of social media storytelling for social movements.

However, before going into unpacking NTA and engaging in the data discussion, this chapter will discuss the first steps for identifying workable inquiries in the field of social movement narratives. It will first begin by comparing small data and Big Data, underlining how this thesis works between the two, and will then present the research strategy and the case study for OWS. I will then introduce NTA as the framework I created to meet the analysis of the large textual corpora of Twitter, look into the ways interviews were used and conducted for this study, and describe how the process of putting together stories, micro-narratives, and narratives worked in this thesis. This chapter will conclude with a brief insight into the ethics and limitations of this thesis.

4.2 Entering the field: first steps for identifying workable methods

This section will demonstrate the conceptual topics of this thesis, all of which come together as I approach ways to answer my research question. These topics are broadly based on both of the research-foundation strands I discussed in Chapters 2 and 3: the sociocultural dimensions of OWS and the narrative characteristics of OWS' story on Twitter.

4.2.1 Working within the seams of Big Data and small data

In recent years, scientists within and beyond established fields of what are considered to be the social sciences and the humanities, have begun engaging with new data infrastructures—the so-called Big Data field—and to use computational technologies and methods to formulate analyses grounded in empirical research. Moving beyond assertions of the 'end of theory' (Anderson, 2008), the real questions now focus on *how* to approach the complex issues raised by emerging data and evolving technologies. A

number of digital methods scholars, alongside data social scientists, have debated upon the political and social dimensions of this data and technology, arguing for the need to use both critical analysis and transparent methods to research Big Data (Crawford, 2016; Kitchin, 2014; Crampton et al., 2013).

This debate proposes several challenges in theory and methods, with a response that looks into determining the limitations of dealing with such big datasets, and underlines the value of research that works with 'small data'[12], which humans can understand without the help of computerised tools. I argue that this thesis sits between Big Data and small data research, and seeks to explore and evaluate critical approaches to data sourced from Twitter. The dataset as a whole can be considered to be a Big Data dataset, but the computerised handling of it, and the focus on specific features in the content of the tweets, makes it more comprehensible and thus also gives it features of 'small data'.

Sociological studies examining blogs and early SMNs have offered insights into emotional differences demographics between genders and 'friending' practices on MySpace (Thelwall, 2008; 2010). More recent studies researched Facebook's levels of positive and negative sentiment (Ahkter and Soria, 2010) and did a Twitter sentiment analysis (Bollen et al., 2011; Thelwall, 2011).[13] In addition to these, some discourse and content analyses have been

[12] Small data, according to Kitchin and Lauriault (2015:9601) is data characterised by sampled data generated to answer specific questions, which is significant in 'answering targeted queries'.

[13] Beyond SMNs research, Ginsberg et al. (2009) compared flu search terms entered into the Google search engine with visits to local doctors and traced the spread of flu across the USA. Their Big Data study was one of the many that were later discovered to be inconsistent and not rigorous enough. It uncovered the limitations and fallacies of taking online data as representative of whole populations or situations and called for a return to 'small data'. For example, Ginsberg et al.'s research, branded as the Google Flu Trends, was disproved three years later, in 2013, when it missed detecting 140 per cent of the flu incidents occurring at the peak of the 2013 flu season. Google soon killed the programme and called for a better, more rigorous Big Data analysis for similar cases. What their actions managed to uncover was that despite their efforts to predict how flu spreads, in order to advance the social good, their methods and analysis of the data were surprisingly blurred and not effective for such large datasets. More precisely, Google's algorithm was randomly adapting search concepts, which were unrelated to flu, into the same context as flu symptoms. For example: 'high school basketball' (Lazer and Kennedy, 2015 Wired). This skewed the data collection, and therefore provided the dataset with invalid information.

conducted, which have explored the change in people's ideology concerning the privacy of childbirth (Fonio et al., 2007), public mood and emotion (Bollen, Pepe, and Mao, 2011), sentiment analysis (Thelwall, Wilkinson, and Uppal, 2010), political opinion mining (Tumasjan et al., 2010), and social connectivity (Bollen et al., 2011). In addition, Tumasjan et al. researched and calculated Twitter in relation to the German general election, and suggested eventually that this means of collecting and analysing data can be as precise for predicting voting figures as traditional polls (2010).[14]

Further work dealing with the intersections between culture, media and narrative theory has investigated computer mediated communication, such as discussion forums (McLellan, 1997), e-mail exchanges as small stories (Georgakopoulou, 2013), and Facebook posts as small stories (Georgakopoulou, 2016). This research has highlighted that these kinds of fragmented narratives can draw on a methodology that is based on social theory embedded in concepts of narrative. The same studies suggest that users can create communities that collectively collaborate to tell stories. Clearly, Big Data has been proven to facilitate explorations in the co-emerging ties between events/trends/stories presented simultaneously offline and online, but algorithmic annotation of emotions in SMNs is still not as rigorous as it should be. Indeed, it arguably should not be applied in cases where large populations are reacting to current events taking place, such as protests, where the high reactionary element of affect usually blends positive with negative reactions. For instance, my analysis has shown that swearing words

[14] However, complications involved in sentiment analysis from Big Data datasets, were further highlighted after Facebook's 2012 emotion study (2014). In this study, Facebook in collaboration with two universities in the US, changed the emotional content of stories and updates shown to specific users' Facebook timeline, and looked into the effects on people reading them, i.e. whether it influenced them negatively or positively. The public, the media, and the academic world soon, and rightly, accused Facebook of circumventing ethical standards for projects that experimented on human subjects. As Alison Powell (2016) argues in her article 'Algorithms, Accountability, and Political Emotion: on the cultural assumptions underpinning sentiment analysis', sentiment analysis has major implications in everyday life, especially with the rise and amplification of 'emotion-driven politics' online (2016). What is more, such data, which is used to train algorithms of sentiment analysis, is more often than not filled with assumptions about the world, and the results usually isolate people of colour, women, and minority communities (Levitin and Levitin, 2011; Crawford, 2013, 2016)

(which in sentiment analysis are considered negative) are also used to describe enthusiasm and surprise.[15]

Previous research supports my choice regarding the data focus, as grounded in today's ever-developing research around Big Data (boyd and Crawford, 2012) and the digitisation of society (Castells, 2009; Turkle, 1997). Through earlier research, I also recognise the complexities and limitations of Big Data datasets. My work outlines a seemingly similar, but quite different approach to both of these fields–sentiment analysis and collective narratives—by examining how detailed qualitative analysis of tweets can afford us with new means for exploring and theoretically arguing for a new kind of social media storytelling. For instance, and as I will talk about in detail later, I focus only on the originally posted (OP) tweets tweeted under the #OWS hashtag, in order to minimise issues with Big Data and to make the tracing of the stories and narratives possible.

Sentiment, network, and comparative analysis, other than being prevalent methods in recent studies, are also the most relevant methods for highlighting the strengths of NTA, which will be discussed in the coming sections. The reason for this is twofold. First, network, sentiment, and comparative analyses are approaches that deal with affective expression and the dynamics behind creating notions of identity and action. When the above discussed studies applied sentiment analysis as their chosen methodology, they were looking to find how people responded, reacted, or expressed their feelings in relation to an event. Therefore, feelings/emotions were the focus of their research. However, sentiment analysis, as I have argued above, lacks depth, and the ability to track the multiple interpretations of language and expression. Therefore, it lacks rigour, when it comes to the analysis of discursive expression. NTA in contrast, since it focuses on qualitatively analysing social media data, works more rigorously to unveil the affective

[15] Despite this interesting discovery, I do not focus on this characteristic of tweets in this thesis. However, it could work as a source for future work.

dimensions of the ways in which people respond, react, and express their feelings. It achieves this by employing a mixed methodology that relies on a mixed discursive and quantitative analysis. Second, network analysis is an important and essential field of literature I use and go back to, in order to inform my arguments throughout this thesis—especially with regards to the collective identity aspect of OWS on Twitter. However, networked narratives are considered to be more hierarchical than the ephemeral fluid character of social media narratives. A networked narrative is created in a specific timeframe, through the stories told or written by a number of people; the networked narrative is then put together as a single constant entity, with a specific plot, characters, and setting, by combining the stories and finding the main characters/leaders of the story.

Dividing a collective narrative into its smaller elements may therefore be difficult because a number of people are invested in it, emotionally or structurally. In comparison, NTA is equipped and admittedly, is based on the micro-elements that construct bigger narratives. Indeed, these neither need to be networked, nor to follow a specific plot. NTA advances from networked narratives and sentiment analysis as the most relevant methods against which it can be contrasted.

4.2.2 Finding the 'Social' in Social Media Data

As I have discussed in Chapter 3, the approach that treats social movements as a collection of narratives follows the 'narrative turn' (Maines, 1993) in academic discourse since the 1990s. Within this context, however, the discursive practices *per se* are usually talked about either in relation to literature (fictional or real stories), or in relation to sociolinguistic practices. In this thesis, these concepts and arguments are being clarified, developed, and questioned in order to explore and analyse the role of narrative in forming social action in OWS. Perceiving social movements through the stories told by people on Twitter is not an attempt to fit all features of social movements

into specific moulds. Indeed, the analysis of social media narratives does not replace current approaches such as framework analysis, social movement analysis, or network analysis, but rather it supports and is supported by them. Here, I argue that social movements do not stand just as a collection of resources, people, behaviour, emotions, and talk, but that narratives are central to their formation. The stories through which these narratives are formed, allow individuals to process the modes of their existence and understand their place in the social order of things, through developing textual representations of the society they inhabit (Goffman, 1981). These social media stories and narratives offer new ways of expressing one's self, and unveil new dynamics of shared and communicated culture that may produce collective action. On these grounds, this work is based on the view that stories, discourses, and narratives on Twitter can unveil the dynamics of social movements such as OWS.

Centring on this, this discussion differs in its approach from previous approaches to OWS or similar movements, which have either focused on the *quantitative analysis of organisation, networks, and dynamics provided by social media* (Bennett, Segerberg and Walker, 2014; Mercea, 2013; Burnap et al., 2012; Juris, 2012; Pickerill and Krinsky, 2012) or on the *qualitative analyses of activists' perceptions and practices of collective identity, organisation, and action* based on interviews and participant observation (Dean, 2012; Feigenbaum, Frenzel and McCurdy, 2013; Hands, 2012; Lievrouw, 2011; Kavada, 2015). Undoubtedly, the latter approaches have demonstrated that social media can and have worked as tools to coordinate social movements, 'advertise' the movements' activities, and create discussions, thus forming new spaces for social movements to represent and enhance their actions. Likewise, the former approaches have exposed the affordances of using social media data to trace social events, as well as the networks and the ties between the online and offline participants (Edwards et al., 2013; Bollen et al., 2011). Even though OWS has been examined, analysed, and sometimes defined, by both of these fields of research, I would

note that much of that social movements framework is still restricted by an exploration into *how* communication is done, while the *what*—the conveyed content of that communication—is discussed in rather general terms.

Likewise, the role of Twitter in the workings of this contemporary social movement is currently over-represented in network theory, but under-represented in discursive content analyses. This is despite many such theories explicitly acknowledging the significance of the written communication and its impact on how movements are represented, organised, and spread. In order to address this gap, this thesis uses a combination of methods to analyse #OWS hashtagged tweets and argues that by combining social media data and narrative analysis, tweets can unveil the grammars that conceptualise this movement in a discursive, digitally generated space.

4.3 Turning the Conceptual Topics into a Research Strategy

This methodology relies on a research strategy rather than on a research design. Both the aim of a research design and the aim of a research strategy is to structure a methodology which ensures that the data collected will allow the researcher to answer their research questions as explicitly as possible. The function of a research design is to specifically and sequentially find what kind of data is needed to answer the research questions. A research design considers preset research questions and designs or determines what kind of data is needed to answer those questions. Meanwhile, a research strategy differs in its approach, as it does not deploy a linear sequence of setting research questions, collecting the data and answering the questions through the data. The research strategy in this thesis employs a more open-ended approach to building a methodology, where the research questions still remain as the primary focus of the methodology, but one of the datasets is also used to inform the analysis of the second dataset. Hence, while a research design would deal 'with a logical problem and not a logistical problem' (Yin, 1989: 29), the NTA research strategy's logistical approach helped me to answer the research questions in a loose rather than a strictly

sequential way (Saunders, 2003).

The methodology of this thesis is therefore original in its choice of the NTA research strategy, because of the ways in which NTA approaches data collection and analysis. NTA as a research strategy has allowed me to investigate the research issue by firstly collecting a certain amount of interview data to create a thematic method of analysing social media data. The effectiveness of this strategy helped me to define which particular research approach was the best option to analyse and combine my two datasets: interviews and social media data. NTA as a research strategy helped me to use the interview data as a guide into the Twitter analysis, instead of using both datasets as two exclusive datasets. NTA has therefore simplified the complex notions of a mixed methodology by using one dataset (the interviews) as a strategy to analyse the second dataset (Twitter data).

Additionally, social movement research during the past decades has drawn extensively upon the concept of 'frame alignment' to talk about the origins, processes and organisation of social movements (Snow and Benford, 1992; Snow et al., 1986; Snow, Fireman, Rytina (1984). Narrative analysis of social movements has framed analysis at its basis. At the same time, it has argued for the importance of discourse, especially in studies that deal with (inter)group formation and interaction. An investigation of social movements through frame theory was primarily inspired by the sociologist Erving Goffman (1974). Goffman argued that frames are the best way to comprehend reality, and their form is such that they work as the mental tools to organise how one perceives and interprets everyday life (Johnston, 1995: 217). In his work, he suggests that 'a primary framework', developed by how we see the natural world, can be changed, be destabilised, or be influenced by others, altering our fundamental interpretation of what is happening around us. These changes are 'the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity, but seen by the

participants to be something quite else' (Goffman, 1974: 43).

Because of the diverse perspectives participants have on social movements, theoretical analysis of social movements through frames became popular between scholars in the late nineties, especially in the works of David Snow and William Gamson. Gamson et al. (1982) investigated social movements through the array of foundational interpretive conceptions of the participants, trying to form a mobilisation theory based on social psychology (Gamson, 1992; Gamson, Fireman, and Retina, 1982: 9). They offered insights into the dynamics of rebellion. However, as social media analysis of social movements is still in its early stages, no clear research strategy exists to analyse the empirical/visible and textual data sourced from these platforms. Bennett and Toft (2008:246) argue that 'the social fragmentation experienced by younger generations in late-modern societies suggests a decline in formal memberships and collective identities, and rising participation in loose-tie networks.' In their view, 'narratives play important roles in structuring these networks, but they may or may not operate as collective action frames brokered by leading organisations.' This flexibility of the traditional frames of collective identity have a twofold effect on communities' narratives. First, they can be so widely and openly interpreted that people can feel personally attached to them. Second, their 'open' and flexible nature usually results in the loss of structural coherence or tensions between the participants.

Therefore, although framing theory informed the ways in which I begun approaching the empirical field, it did not present adequate tools for analysing the narrative elements I have outlined in Chapter 3: emplotment, time, space, polyphony, narrators, storyteller, reader, author and collective stories, and the five sub-questions I am interested in answering:

1. What kinds of stories do people tell in connection to OWS on Twitter?
2. How do these stories change over time?

3. How do they form narratives that tell OWS' story?
4. How do specific events affect these narratives?
5. Do Twitter stories unveil different narrative linearities, characteristics and identities for social movements?

Instead of framing theory I deploy a more discourse-oriented approach for the 'thematic' analysis of narratives, following Snow and al.'s (1986) emphasis on the importance of discourse. Drawing on the role of discursive elements in social movements from a textual perspective, Snow et al. (1986) stressed the importance of ideology and beliefs in the construction of social movements, and suggested that frames can reclaim the importance of 'meaning.' More precisely, they can reclaim: 'the amplification and extension of extant meanings, the transformation of old meanings, and the generation of new meanings' (Snow and Benford, 1992: 136). This approach was more relevant to my research objective(s) as it allowed me to look into, and analyse, the stories instead of the network or participatory nature of the social movement. Through discourse-oriented narrative analysis I examine the texts of OWS and decode the meanings behind the stories structuring it on Twitter, while drawing upon the frames within which the movement was embedded. The main point of this 'thematic' strategy is to create notions, classifications, and forms of theoretical meaning making, which arise from the data through a comparative coding process between theory, interviews and social media data. Taking into consideration from where and from whom the data comes, this work is based on constructing thematic categories of data that do not rise randomly, but are instead formed based on interpreting and understanding the narratives of the movement. I will unpack this approach further later in this chapter, when I describe NTA. However, first, the significance of OWS as a case study needs to be underlined in the frame of this research's strategy.

4.3.1 Focusing on a single case: the challenge of multiplicity in a globalised era

To investigate social media stories for social movements, I had initially aimed to examine three case studies of Occupy: *los Indignados*, the Occupy Wall Street movement, and Occupy London. The challenges of dealing with three case studies became apparent as soon as I started collecting data online, and was further complicated when I started interviewing activists from New York and London. As I became more familiar with the two first movements (OWS and Occupy London), I also began to question the commonalities and mutual culture I had initially considered as a given for these movements. My first assumption, that these movements shared a great deal of cultural elements, crumbled down right after I finished interviewing the sixth activist of the Occupy Wall Street movement. During this interview, my interviewee argued: 'Protests were happening everywhere, but that had nothing to do with us' (Shawn, teacher, 34). This position echoed through several other interviews too, but at that point it was becoming more apparent that each movement was too dependent upon their own distinct social, cultural, and economic context. Although they shared some common lines stemming from the economic crisis of 2008, as I discussed extensively in Chapter 2, they also had major differences. My growing awareness of the particularity of each sub-movement, the volume of data that each case could generate and the centrality of Occupy Wall Street's movement in initiating the Occupy movement, directed my decision to focus on this case as an object of study for this thesis.

Lofland (1995: 21) defines a case study as 'a holistic investigation of some space- and time-rooted phenomenon', while Snow and Trom (2002) build on this to suggest three features of a social movement case study. As they assert, a case study should be: (1) an exploration and analysis of an instance or branch of an enclosed social phenomenon that (2) endeavours to form abundantly accurate and concentrating commentary of the phenomenon investigated, through (3) employing a triangulation of a number of methods

or processes that include but extend further to qualitative techniques (2002: 147). Their definition also offers a valuable guide for reflecting upon the limits of this work. Furthermore, I was forced to approach OWS through a set of research aims and questions, through both the boundaries imposed by the movement's protest, but also by the boundaries imposed by the confines and nature of PhD research. As such, the OWS case study is formed both by the outcome of this protest movement, and by the temporal limitations of the data collection process. However, while this might be seen as a limitation, it works well with shaping a dataset and a period for the movement that can be considered as representative.

Concentrating on one case study has allowed me to adopt a coherent and comprehensive approach to the analysis of the movement's storytelling practices. I was able to interview more people from New York and examine OWS' narratives on Twitter more holistically. This single case study approach was fruitful for 'achieving high conceptual validity' and 'fostering new hypotheses' (George and Bennett, 2005: 19), since it confirmed that the concepts I identified as important to this research were credible and applicable (e.g. collective identity and the role of the police). Based on this, I believe that this approach provided effective tools for understanding and documenting the meanings, discourses and narratives of social movements, leading to the development of new insights about the ways in which these movements are formed and their interrelationships with social media.

On the same lines as the choice to focus on OWS rather than on multiple Occupy movements, I chose to focus on Twitter and not on multiple social media platforms, like Facebook. There were three reasons for this decision: two methodological and one empirical. First, the structure of Twitter as a platform differs greatly from the structure of Facebook. In 2011, although it was not as developed, widely adopted, and embedded in everyday life as it is today, Facebook was still a multi-media platform, with video, text, advertisements and links; a platform that was governed by powerful

algorithms whose workings we were, and still are, unaware of. The affordances and functionalities of Facebook, would have added an extra layer of difficulty and complexity to this study's aim to focus on the narratives of OWS, as the unknown structures behind the visibility, access, and hierarchy of content created risks this research would not have been able to sustain. Second, if I were to focus on more than one SMN, the discussion would have also been directed towards cross-platform narratives and would have had to go into a comparative discussion of the two platforms instead of single-handedly focusing and analysing the textual content produced in these platforms. Since the focus of this study was the micro-elements that formed bigger narratives, the decision to focus on the textual elements of Twitter allowed for a much more nuanced analysis than having to talk about 'distributed narratives' (Walker, 2005) or 'transmedia stories' (Jenkins, 2006). Finally, interviews with OWS activists have shown that even though they considered Facebook an important and essential platform, they put more trust into Twitter and communicated more widely on Twitter. Indeed, the instantaneity of its platform was the most important factor for them, in contrast to Facebook, which was considered as a more "weighted" communication tool.

Finally, while OWS is viewed as part of Occupy, this thesis is cautious about over-generalising any claims made about this single movement into a network of movements, or network of networks (Van Aelst, 2004: 121). This is due to the varied composition of organisations linked to OWS and the important role that contextual (social, cultural, political, economic) factors played on the direction of their social action. In my view, any attempt to analyse the narratives of Occupy beyond the historical, social-political specificity of a single movement, such as the OWS, would demand significantly more resources than those available to a PhD researcher. Hence, while Occupy is perceived as deserving its own analytical stage, which OWS is part of, the thesis does not examine it explicitly and considers this limitation to work in favour of the thesis, rather than against it.

This benefit will be further exemplified and clarified through the discussion of NTA in the following sections.

4.4 Introducing Narrative Thematic Analysis (NTA): A discourse approach to big text datasets

I adopt a narrative analysis perspective, which I name NTA, to analyse online discourses on Twitter since, unlike other theoretical traditions, the narrative analytic approach starts from the micro and then focuses on the macro elements of the narratives, which can be analysed in a 'thematic' way. NTA informs digital data research by applying a bottom-up perspective on the empirical phenomenon under investigation, and forming narratives through tweets. This perspective refines social movement and narrative concepts, reconstructs meanings, and finally proposes a new way of looking at contemporary movements: through their representation on Twitter as narratives.

Initially, the interviews were considered to be the core of this research's data material, since I had issues in accessing and utilising the Twitter data collected in 2011 under the #ows hashtag. Therefore, the first plan for this study was to use interviews as the main point of access to the narratives of the movement. However, as soon as I got access to the Twitter data at the beginning of 2013, I shifted most of my analytic focus to the social media data, through which I believed I could trace the Twitter stories, micro-narratives, and narratives of the movement on Twitter in a more precise way. This thesis validates this belief. Thus, even though the interviews were still considered integral to the research process, they were approached as supportive and guiding material rather than the foundation of the research strategy, after the Twitter data became available to analyse.

Hence, interviews in the NTA model were used both as a sequential and iterative tool. As a sequential tool they were deployed as the first dataset

from which the themes of analysis were drawn. As an iterative tool, interviews were used as the tools to which I returned to find more narrative themes, using the results of the previous iteration of a theme as the starting point for the next theme. This repeating process aimed to generate rigorous research outcomes from both the interviews and the Twitter data, and to create a clear and consistent path towards uncovering the movement's interwoven narratives on Twitter.

The links between theory, interviews and social media data as text/narrative hence become complementary: the first offers a guide for directing me towards the right fieldwork and collection of digital data, but does not force any kind of theoretical frame on the work, thus allowing it to work alongside the social media data. Social media data, the second dataset, attaches meaning to the concepts that are promptly tied to and generated through the analysis of the empirical world, and informs the core data source of this thesis. Therefore, in this thesis, social media data work is informed by both theory and interviews with participants in OWS, and is analysed extensively to unveil the narratives of the movement.

4.4.1 NTA in context

The dataset of this research relies vastly on the argument that the movement's discourse is formed through tweets as stories. Therefore, I look into the content of the tweets to decipher the stories and the narratives formed through them. I begin by drawing from a number of concepts from discourse theory, and more specifically Laclau and Mouffe (1985). Their work suggests an approach to discursive structure that can be described as 'an ensemble of differential positions' (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 106). I will combine this with Bakhtin's notion of multivocality, which I talked about in Chapter 3. Each discourse owns its 'privileged discursive points' called 'nodal points', which in their turn create micro-narratives, before developing narratives (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 112). Through NTA, a discourse can be thought of as a timespace/chronotope (as I discussed in Chapter 3), in which

multiple micro-narratives or dominant narratives are linked together. To put it simply, OWS' Twitter discourse is read as a body of multiple voices (multivocality) that forms narratives.

In sociolinguistic studies, this thematic analysis of discourses, wherein groups of conceptual elements are selected based on the similarity of their environment (equivalent) and then combined into kinds of equivalence, is based on the relationship between the discourses (Harris, 1952). Drawing on Harris', and Laclau's and Mouffe's work, I propose that narrative analysis can be used to unveil the nodal points of OWS and their equivalency. In this way, the moments and links between narratives formed within Twitter create a space where the discourse of the movement forms. Thematic analysis concerns itself with the open coding of data, i.e. the structuring of a set of themes to depict the phenomenon at hand by placing 'like with like' (Morse and Field, 1995:197). The researcher looks for patterns in the data, codes them and groups them accordingly (Strauss, 1987). As I mentioned earlier, I also follow Snow et al.'s (1986) emphasis on the importance of discourse, drawing on the role of discursive elements in social movements from a textual perspective. Pulling discourse analysis and thematic analysis together, then, the mixed-method approach employed in this thesis draws from quantitative methods (textual analysis) as well as qualitative methods (discourse theory). The goal is to consolidate interpretive approaches with the analysis of large amounts of social media texts.

This mixture of methods that structure NTA convey what Ong in 1982 described as 'secondary orality'. As Ong wrote, 'Words are made out of units (types) which pre-exist as units before the words which they will constitute. Print suggests that words are things far more than writing ever did' (Ong, 1982: 116). In the same way, the digital text becomes much different than print, and demands or deserves an exploration into its content worlds, which goes further than simple automated sentiment or keyword analysis. The communicative capabilities of Twitter demonstrate a textual interactivity that

can be described as an interaction between its users, and not just as a passive consumption of the text by the reader that can be analysed through algorithms and purely computerised methods. Users and readers are placed as participants in the action, not as spectators. They exist in the same space where the story is unfolding. Ignoring the fact that social spaces such as Twitter have dimensions that extend further than their digital nature and their algorithms, discounts their power in our society and the influence they have on our everyday lives.

Therefore, instead of striving to use purely narratological methods to analyse the OWS story, I endeavour to illustrate how narrative concepts, and the way in which they function, needs to be re-evaluated in light of notions and methods used to examine digitised corpora and social events. This approach marks a shift away from pure sentiment analysis and towards a more discursive thematic analysis that takes into account the vulnerabilities of algorithms and the power of words. I also augment the findings and support these findings with interview data.

This chapter, thus far, has pointed to the context and conceptual topics this thesis works in: traversing Big Data and small data and developing a mixed quantitative and qualitative discursive frame, which looks into the Twitter communication of social movements. I have argued in favour of a single case study and stated that instead of the multiplicity of Occupy movements, I chose OWS as a single investigative case, both because of its significance to Occupy, but also in practical terms of data collection and analysis. Here, I continue by discussing how NTA was applied step by step as the analytical framework of my research, while at the same time unpacking the framework itself.

4.5 NTA: The analytical framework step by step

As in a common qualitative strategy, I first selected a smaller random sample of 10,000 tweets out of the 596,003 total tweets in question, for close

reading, discourse interpretation and coding. This allowed me to form some initial interpretations of the data, and to focus on specific narratives.[16] By deploying NTA, I oscillated between the interviews, Twitter data, quantitative and qualitative analysis. The process will be described here step-by-step, at times making reference to the ways it was analysed in Excel and/or in Visual FoxPro. NTA moves through a series of six quantitative and qualitative analytical steps, outlined in Figure 1.

The iterative nature of this strategy has adopted the logical sequence presented in Figure 1, but it has also followed the full NTA sequence several times during the collection and analysis of the data. Each iteration went through the six steps: Conducting and Analysing interview data, Indexing Twitter data, Selection, Emplotment of micro-narratives, Narrativisation, and Visualisation; and produced one narrative each time it completed a lifecycle of the sequence. Each narrative was formed based on the themes drawn from the interviews, and the ways in which these themes could be applied to the emplotment and narrativisation of those same thematic narratives in relation to Twitter data. Thus, rigour increased as more narratives surfaced and were traced through multiple iterations. In this thesis, there were six iterations, out of which only four were considered to form dominant narratives. These four narratives were conducted up to the end of the sequence: the Visualisation. Each of those four iterations forms one analytical chapter in this thesis (Chapters 4-7). I will now describe each of these six stages one by one, in order to demonstrate the process of analysis.

[16] I had focused on six narratives at the beginning of this research: Media ecology, Twitter abuse, Police Violence, Collective Identity, Accusing the State, Accusing the Economic Crisis. Eventually, I decided to focus on the first four, because they were the most active narratives in my dataset and because of PhD time limitations.

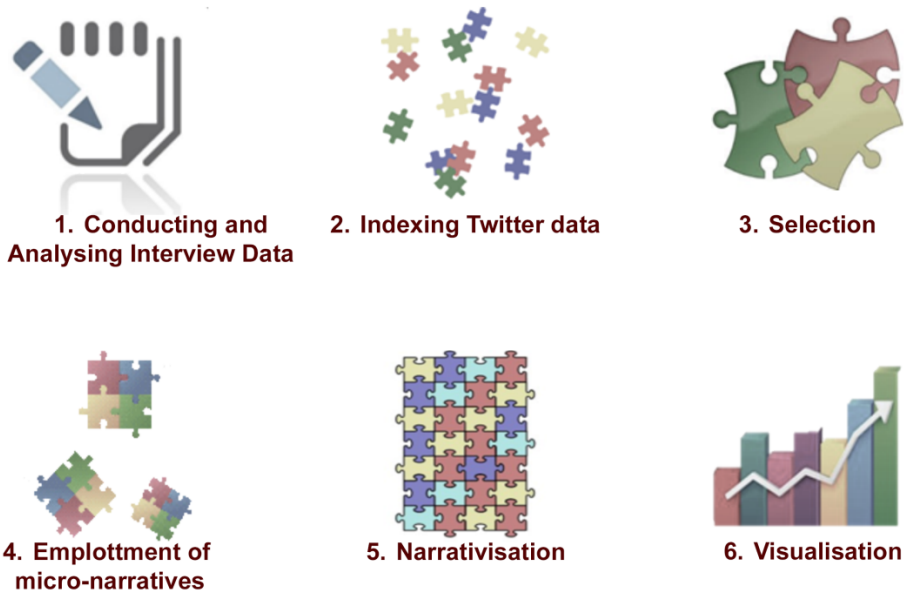

Figure 1: The analytical steps of Narrative Thematic Analysis

4.5.1 Conducting and Analysing Interview data

As narrative is built on stories that are put into a plot, what I define here is what makes stories into narratives. All 596,003 stories/tweets were taken into consideration and analysed along with the Twitter data. Therefore, the unit of analysis here is both the interview data and the Twitter data. *The first step was to conduct and analyse the interviews, in order to draw out themes that the interviewees brought up (such as, police violence or Twitter abuse).*

4.5.1.1 Semi-structured Interviews: From Multiple Twitter Voices to on-the-ground Stories

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, my fieldwork relied on two sources of data: semi-structured interviews and social media data from Twitter. With the turn of the social sciences to the study of digital platforms, some scholars have argued that the interpretation and analysis of big social data may give rise to controversies, with regards to their use as representative samples (see for example, Thelwall, 2008). My research certainly took into account the fact that issues and implications would arise, since I am dealing with user-generated data online. However, by drawing on

the interviews, these implications were curtailed, thus making the case of this thesis stronger. By blending data from Twitter and interviews from people involved with OWS, narrative elements intertwined, affording OWS' strategies a character that unveiled the narrative dynamics constructing the movement on Twitter. This approach also offered a different view of OWS, since it drew on the personal stories of the protesters who experienced the movement on the ground.

I hence employed semi-structured interviews to create the first dataset, which consists of stories told by activists who took part in OWS in New York. The participants were selected because of their role in organising or participating in the OWS protests, or because of their involvement in the working groups at Zuccotti Park. This included people who had a major role in the development of these protests and people who engaged partly in protests as participants. I chose the interviewees using snowball sampling, starting first from activists I knew through my previous activist background and others who played a major role in OWS, as identified by reports in the mainstream media (Blaikie, 2000; Weiss, 1994). I initially contacted nine activists. While I interviewed some of them, others only provided me with names and contact details for other activists who may have been interested in being interviewed. I hence constructed a sample of interviewees (n=12). This may not be considered a representative large sample, given the volume of OWS participants, but it was representative, as it covered a broad range of activists and provided a tentative picture of those who actively organised protests under the name of Occupy Wall Street. Seven of the interviews were conducted in New York City and took place during March 2013. The interviews were conducted in cafés, parks, or in the homes of the protesters being interviewed. The rest of the interviews (n=5) were conducted through Skype.

In approaching the interviewees, I ensured that my presence and role would be as unconstrained as possible, allowing the participants to feel safe and at

ease when sharing their stories. Giving these participants a voice to express their concerns, whether they were of a political or of any other nature, was essential and an important ingredient in my data gathering. An informal conversational interview style, which often diverted from the semi-structured interview guide, allowed them to be more expressive and open in discussing the movement, its organisation and any other issues, such as the role of the police in OWS, mainstream media's influence on the movement and the role of Twitter in OWS. Indeed, these topics guided the data analysis in the later stages. I was cautious about raising particular topics relevant to my research questions and also recognised that in-depth loosely structured 'narrative' interviews were also suited for this project. This was precisely because I was interested in the ideologies that fed activists' involvement in OWS, their knowledge, perceptions and stories about social movements in general, as well as their reasoning behind the use of SMNs in this particular case. Structured interviews or surveys would not have been sufficient for this kind of research, since they rely on participants' answers to specific questions, without considering the reasons and motivations behind their answers (Burawoy, 1988). Semi-structured interviews seemed to be ideal for data gathering from OWS' supporters.

The interviews covered the following general topics (see information sheet, the full interview schedule, and the consent form in Appendix 1):

- The respondent's social movement history;
- The respondent's views on social media activist dynamics;
- An evaluation of the Occupy Wall Street movement; and
- The respondent's involvement.

Covering these four areas allowed me to present and explore not only activists' personal narratives regarding OWS, but also their opinions, explanations of the practical aspects of offline and online practices, and their reflections on the SMNs aspect of the movement. This approach offered a

much-needed counterpart to the analysis of the Twitter narratives and contributed to the structure of the whole story of the movement.

My initial considerations regarding these interviews were formed by the need to select respondents who would also contribute to the analysis of Twitter in OWS. Thus, my choice of people became a bit more precise by the end of this part of fieldwork. Whilst I still endeavoured to speak to activists who were actively involved in any way with the cause, I recognised at the same time that they had to be able to talk about the use of social media—by them or by their peers—during the protests. This realisation extended the research, by focusing on personal discussions that included their thoughts on OWS as a contemporary social movement and how they themselves were using social media as a tool for communication, information, or perhaps organisation. My reasoning behind this additional aspect in the interview protocol was to test the validity of some pre-conceptions of the study, regarding social media narratives, and also to interrogate whether there was willingness from the people that participated in the protests to open up and discuss issues surrounding the movement. The content of these interviews produced new research questions and made me rethink some of the assumptions that this study initially made. For instance, the issue surrounding mainstream media representation and coverage of OWS, which Chapter 5 looks into, only came up during the interviews with the protesters. Even though I was aware of how negative mainstream media coverage about OWS was, I was not aware of how much it influenced the practices and media ecology of the movement itself.

The interviews themselves lasted for on average one hour, with some of them spanning to an hour and a half in length. I found the hour mark to be sufficient time to ask all of the questions I had developed in my interview schedule, while I also adjusted some of the interview questions to fit with each of the respondents' role within OWS. All the interviews were recorded, transcribed and included in the final version of the qualitative framework of

this research, and the names of the participants were coded under pseud. While I avoided using NVivo for the SMN data, this platform was essential for analysing the interviews, as it enables the coding and organisation of the interview data, thus allowing one to investigate patterns among people, attitudes and expressions. While analysing these interviews, I realised that this research can contribute to a valid discussion on the relationship between OWS and social media. During this process, I also realised that there was a reciprocity between their stories and narratives structured on Twitter. As a result, the empirical analysis in Chapter 5 draws more on the interviews, but as the discussion moves forward into more specific narrative structures on Twitter, material from the interviews works as supplementary evidence. The first step—conducting and analysing interviews—thus worked towards the second and third steps of NTA. The interviews performed two roles: they provided some themes to investigate in the social media data, while they also worked *with* social media data as supplementary material.

4.5.2 Indexing Twitter data

The second step was a strictly quantitative operation that entailed collecting the data, and then creating an index, in Excel, of all the tweets in the dataset under analysis. Looking at the whole list of tweets, the first step towards the narrative analysis of the text was made: this was the whole story of the movement set up on one spreadsheet.

To evaluate and trace the narratives of OWS on Twitter here, I use the analysis of a dataset consisting of tweets hashtagged under #OWS, and comprised of 5,024,103 tweets. The dataset was selected from the database of the Occupy Research project (http://occupyresearch.net), a scheme that contains millions of tweets from numerous occupy camps and occupy protests that took place around the world in 2011. All Twitter datasets on the site, including the one used here, were collected between September and December 2011, through R-Shief (http://www.r-shief.org), using the open Twitter Streaming API. This elaborated collection process was and still is

partly possible because of the access we are given to Twitter's open streaming Applications Programming Interface (API), which allows the collection of tweets over time and links to computational processes that allow the analysis and visualisation of this data (Anderson, 2007: 14).[17]

Twitter provides several services through its API, starting with the Spritzer service that offers a randomly sampled 1% of all tweets, followed by the Gardenhose service, which is a randomly sampled 10% of all tweets, and finally the Firehose that gives access to all tweets. I have yet to come across an academic study that has used Twitter data sourced from the Gardenhose or the Firehose service, with most of the scholarly work based on the 1% service of the Spritzer. This is either because of the high fees involved in accessing the other two services, or because the 1% of the available tweets was considered sufficient for research (see Edwards, Williams, and Williams, 2013). Here, it should be noted that the number of Twitter users is so vast that even the smallest percentage of users produce sample sizes of a magnitude larger than the sample sizes available to traditional qualitative social research.[18]

I do not, and I believe I cannot, argue that my data is a representative sample for the US population or even the New York population, but this is not significant to this study since it does not argue about population-related concepts. The significance of this sample lies in the fact that it is a significant sample of OWS' tweets, even though it is uncertain how representative it exactly is, since we do not know how Twitter selects the 1% of tweets. I am

[17] For collecting Twitter data, the Twitter Streaming API offers access similar to how a library works. In the same way you can use a library, the Twitter Streaming API allows the data researchers to ask for data in a structured way. Open, low-cast and freely available, these kind of APIs do not need any software installation on computers, while they determine the format of the responses to the inquired data, by storing it in a database 'according to the data types specified in the data model. i.e. message, username, timestamp —converted to DD-MM-YYYY format, URL data etc.' (Sloan, Morgan, Housley, Williams, Edwards, Burnap, and Rana, 2013: 2)

[18] In addition, the 1% of the tweets that is available from the Spritzer service has been shown to form a representative sample of the full UK Twitter stream, in a UK study by Sloan et al. (2013). However, I am sceptical about the representativeness of Twitter for the population of the US.

not forming a position for the whole of the US, but I am focusing specifically on the activists and supporters tweeting about OWS during a specific period on Twitter. Since I too used the Spritzer service, this means that in the context of the whole Twitter content I will only be able to get 1% of the daily tweets tweeted on the platform. However, at the same time, this small chunk of data, which amounted to around '3.5 million tweets per day' in 2013, is estimated as enough to gather all the tweets that refer to the OWS movement under the #hashtag (Sloan et al., 2013).[19] All in all, missing data was not a problem due to restrictions surrounding the Spritzer service, since the collection was based on specific characteristics.[20]

Out of the number of datasets that were accessible on the Occupy Research project's site, I used the file of tweets referring to the Occupy Wall Street movement, which was based on the #ows hashtag for tweets tweeted between the 6th of October 2011 and the 31st of December 2011 (n= 4,995,369). Out of that dataset, 910,933 tweets were original posted tweets, including meNTAons (n=360,466) (18,2%). 3,049,323 were retweets (61,1%), and 1,035,113 were tweets including links, photos, and videos (20,7%). Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of these three categories for the whole period of data available to me.

[19] Twitter's use in 2011 was not as broad as it is nowadays, or in 2013, and Twitter activity was much more limited than today's usage levels.

[20] There were, however, instances in which the API stopped working for some reason, and instances in which Twitter was down, which form some gaps in the data. The gaps are days: 21/10 and 26/10, as well as 11/10 between 11am-5pm, and 6/10 between 8pm and 12am.These gaps were normalised based on the rounding of the rest of the data.

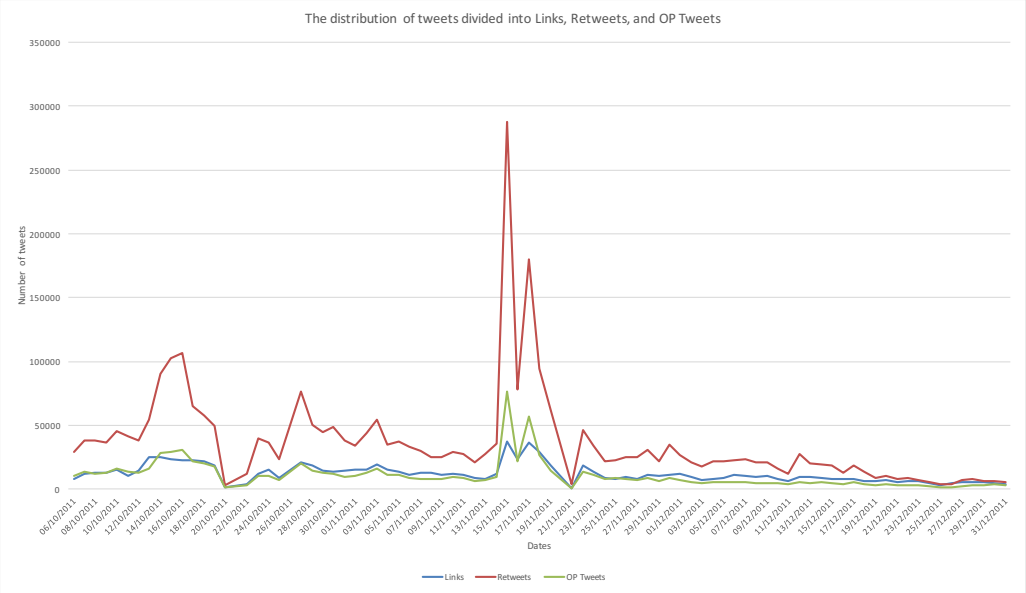

Figure 2: The distribution of tweets divided into Links (including photographs and videos), Retweets, and OP tweets from the 6th of October to the 31st of December

However, in order to turn these tweets into stories, micro-narratives and narratives, I first had to index them in a way in which I could work with them, both qualitatively and quantitatively. In what follows, I first go through the tools I used to try and index the tweets, retweets and link tweets (photos, videos, links), and finally explain how I used Visual FoxPro and Excel to structure the datasets.

4.5.2.1 Between Trial and Error: Piloting Indexing

In 2012, I gained access to some new social media analytic tools being developed at the time, and wanted to try them out. I wondered whether they could help my analysis, bring up new hypotheses or uncover micro-narratives my initial pilot study of 10,000 tweets did not bring up. I first used a computational platform called COSMOS and a computational tool called AntConc,[21] which is often used in sociolinguistic studies, while at a later stage

[21] See: http://www.laurenceanthony.net
I then tried to use AntConc, created by Laurence Anthony, as a tool to trace the similarities between the tweets, focusing on word patterns related to specific words. AntConc compares the frequency counts of words. Through this text-analysis software package, I was also able to produce word concordances and clusters (see for examples in Appendix 4). In concordance mode, AntConc produces all the instances in which a word or a combination of words appears in the dataset, together with their neighbouring words, depending on the researcher's chosen width of concordance. The cluster mode was used here to give a list of word clusters — through n-grams — according to the frequency of each cluster. These processes were applied with the aim of reaching

I used a Google-spreadsheet based tool created by Martin Hawksey.[22] The aim in using both of these platforms was to input my data and try to analyse it through their specialised features. Whilst the rest of Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) such as NVivo and Atlas.ti interpret data by building theories and semantic networks, COSMOS, for example, analyses Twitter data by visualising it and showing the ties, connections, relations and other characteristics shared between users. Of course, other similar tools were also available, such as Gephi7 and NodeXL (Smith et al., 2010), both of which effectively analyse and visualise social networks, thus supporting research that is similar to this. However, even though these platforms are capable of supporting large amounts of data collection and supporting quantitative social network analysis, such as the ties between users, they lacked the analytical and qualitative parameters I needed.

My last resort in finding a tool to help me analyse the tweets I had in hand, was Hawksey's TAGS tool.[23] I found TAGS to be much more reliable in terms of handling the data and uploading or filtering it in different ways, but it still

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an analysis of what can be computationally analysed in this textual data. This would later enable a further investigation of the narratives told about the movement through written communication. Unfortunately, AntConc could not handle the weight of my data and it crashed multiple times while processing. This process was really time-consuming even when I tried to divide the dataset into smaller chunks. AntConc could not do what I precisely wanted to do with my data, since it only focused on words and not tweets as whole discourse elements. Furthermore, itwas unstructured, and was unreliable. It did, however, help me form hypotheses about stories, through the use of clusters of words (see, for example, in Appendix 4). It can, however, be used in larger-corpus studies in which the research questions rely on the frequency of words and not stories.

[22] See: <http://mashe.hawksey.info/2013/02/twitter-archive-tagsv5/>
COSMOS could instead have worked here as a social observation tool and analytic mechanism that would hold together the development of such research and support the implementation of 'defensible academic social research methods for the digital social data' (Burnap, Avis, Rana, 2014: 221). Due to programming limitations, the programme was deemed unusable. Hence, I drew on COSMOS in order to adopt a more detailed and wide approach to the analysis of the social media texts I had in my possession already. However, the tool was still under development and even though it seemed relevant to my project, the support system was not ready yet. Indeed, inputting my data did not work as I expected it would work. The platform can be used best if it is responsible for both the collection and visualisation of the data; inputting datasets does not work as effectively or efficiently as needed. Even though I did not use COSMOS as my analytic tool, I gained insights and ideas from its implementation on other projects, and learned how to use the platform for future projects.

[23] See: <http://mashe.hawksey.info/2013/02/twitter-archive-tagsv5/>.

was not the best platform to analyse my data discursively. It works, however, very well for quantitative methods and the visualisation of data.[24]

Finally, I decided to move entirely to Visual FoxPro to unclutter my data, and to Excel to analyse my dataset both qualitatively and quantitatively on the Microsoft platform. Through Excel I was able to read and code the tweets according to the stories they told and to visualise the data in order to present OWS' narratives. For Thomas and Cook (2005:10) visual analytics have been defined as 'the science of analytical reasoning supported by the interactive visual interface'. In the same way, Excel aided the analytical reasoning behind the OWS' narratives by using a partly computational analysis, which featured pivot tables and later qualitatively and manually coding the tweets. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods I used on Excel offered a better interaction with the data, where I was able to investigate and uncover relationships in the data that were not clear or apparent at first or through the rest of the platforms. In the context of this second step therefore, the movement's story is constructed via parallel stories in the hybrid space of Twitter.

4.5.2.2 Indexing data through Visual FoxPro & Excel

First, it is important to note that the data provided by R-Shief was in a text format (.txt). Having five million tweets in text format can be overwhelming, especially when the data included is in multiple formats and spread through three months. To structure the data into an intelligible and tangible format I could work with, I employed the help of Visual FoxPro, a Microsoft data-centric programming language that works procedurally. FoxPro is a database that works through SQL queries and allows data manipulation in a number of ways. The programming loops in which it works are similar to other

[24] TAGS works on Google documents, but it lacked Excel's functions. If available, these would have been really helpful to me. I believe TAGS could be a great starting tool for someone who wants to get into the research of social media and to begin the collection of tweets through the platform itself, but it does not work well with imported data. This is particularly the case when you have a lot of data with a slightly different format than the one TAGS is structured for.

programming languages. For example: commands based on loops of do, if, while, for, else. Its indexing commands also helped to structure the data in a number of files, saved on the database. Then, as the second step, I brought that code and the rest of the codes, which referred to police violence, together, combined as one thematic entity, in order to create bigger narratives. In this way, I brought micro-narratives together by associating codes about police brutality like 'reactions to police brutality' or 'support to police violence' under the violence narrative.

A number of tables were created via Visual FoxPro, in order to structure the data in an appropriate format (in the format shown below). The main folder was called ALLTWEETS and included all five million tweets. The second column shows the number of characters allowed for each item in the table:

Username	Character (30)
Tweet	Character (254)
Profile Picture	Character (150)
Date	Date
Hour	Integer (4)
Minute	Integer (4)
Geolocation	Character (10)
MeNTAon1	Character (25)
MeNTAon2	Character (25)
Language	Character (10)
Reply to User	Character (25)
Reply to User2	Character (25)

The query feature of Visual FoxPro allowed me to select the tweets in three separate tables, thus dividing the tweets into Tweets, Links and Retweets, using criteria such as:

[if !supportLists]1. [endif]Tweets

[if !supportLists]2. [endif]Links

[if !supportLists]3. [endif]Retweets

The data was later imported into Microsoft Excel to be analysed and visualized. This led to deleting tweets that used hashtags that referred to other Occupy movements in the USA, Canada, Australia or Europe. The cleaning process of the dataset was labour-intensive and needed an identification of hashtags that referred to other movements (n=78), and the deletion of the tweets that did. A complete list of the hashtags cleaned out of the dataset can be found in Appendix 2. The reason I restricted the collection to just one hashtag was in order to explore the OWS-tweets that had a direct connection to the movement. In this way I managed to develop an archive for the OWS story that was as much focused on the single case study as possible. Guided through the use of the main hashtag (#), the ideas and topics that referred to the movement were much easier to detect, while at the same time I was able to trace any existing cross-referencing between tweets and to code them into thematic categories (Haythornthwaite and Wellman, 1998; Stork and Richards, 1992).

In order to investigate how textual-analytic methods convey concepts and explanatory directions in social media narratives, a bottom-up data driven approach was chosen to interpret stories under the #OWS hashtag in the OP tweets. In order to focus on the story, the *what* of the narrative, instead of on the ways it is conveyed, I used quantitative methods to generate themes. I divided the tweets based on their content, and later drew on qualitative methods to test those themes. I read the tweets and coded them manually, in a similar way to what Tognini-Bonelli (2001) defines as 'corpus driven methods'. As I have previously mentioned, the analysis of social media data has yet to form its own field in the social sciences. Knowing that I wanted to focus on the stories twitterers told regarding the movement, I knew that I would have to spend long hours reading tweets and coding them into thematic categories of narratives and stories. However, the amount of data I

had available to me made my job of conducting analysis arduous. Step 3 helped me clear the dataset and choose a better focus for my research aims.

4.5.3 Selection

The third step—selection—aimed to clean all units, and all tweets that were not relevant to OWS' story. It de-cluttered the dataset and removed tweets by hijacking the hashtags and only focusing on #OWS. I also removed the retweets, tweets with links, and tweets with photos, in order to focus on the Originally Posted (OP) tweets.

The selection process took place in Visual FoxPro, since the dataset was large and required knowledge of the platform's functions. This process broke the dataset into smaller forms and made the dataset more functional. During this step, I also adopted a partly computerised and qualitative approach, in which I looked for specific words or groups of words, in order to sort tweets based on my criteria, and work from and through that even smaller dataset. For instance, if I was looking for all the tweets referring to Obama, I created pivot tables with the tweets mentioning him and then manually coded those tweets in step 4.

By using this kind of keyword filtering, I also restricted the dataset to the one chosen hashtag, #OWS, as the single narrator of the movement's story, while the text based analysis allowed me to pinpoint and examine complex 'association patterns,' those being 'the systemic ways in which linguistic features are used in association with other linguistic and non-linguistic features' of the tweets' content (Biber, Conrad, and Reppen, 2006: 5).[25] What I refer to non-linguistic features, I reference the parts of the tweets

[25] See Gerry Knowles, "Corpora, Databases and the Organisation of Linguistic Data", in *Using Corpora for Language Research,* ed. Jenny Thomas and Michael Short, pp. 36-53, (London: Longman, 1996).
Tony McEnery and Andrew Wilson, *Corpus Linguistics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), p. 87-116

that were not words, such as timestamps, date and usernames. Gibson's theoretical perspectives are a vital point of departure for this kind of discussion, since he suggests that narratives can expand openly in a number of directions. Because of the openness evidenced in tweets, as mixtures of linguistic and non-linguistic stories, *social media narratives may be described as a flux of events,* which combine to create a result that intensifies through time and is shaped through the events structuring it—two crucial features of any narrative (Ricoeur, 1991: 559).

For this second step then, I created spreadsheets with each of the forty days' data, in order to make it easier for me to analyse, compare and contrast the day-by-day data. I then used Excel's Search functions to generate timeline structures and statistics based on the number of tweets tweeted per day, to identify the most active days/events influencing the movement. In order to identify these, I needed to filter all the tweets according to day, see during which of the days more tweets were produced, compare them with the number of tweets mentioned in previous days and pick out the most apparently significant days/events, as well as the lesser significant days. This enabled me to compare differences in tweeting behaviours. Eventually, the days that proved to be the most important, which were subsequently chosen to be analysed qualitatively were days on which protests took place or days that played a crucial role in the structure, evolution and organisation of the movement, e.g. Obama giving a speech and mentioning OWS, or MSM spreading misinformation on OWS. This selection step will now be discussed in more detail, with reference to my dataset.

4.5.3.1 What can be counted doesn't always count

Following the same lines as my discussion earlier about this thesis existing at the interstices between Big Data and small data, this section, part of NTA's step 3, will discuss the ways I made the dataset I had in hand manageable and functional for this study.

There is a popular saying suggesting that: 'What counts can't always be counted; what can be counted doesn't always count'. This attitude became even more apparent after the primary analysis of all the tweets under the hashtag, including the retweets, the links, and the OP tweets. As we can see from Figure 3, the dataset is very large, and if it were all again to be taken into account and analysed, this project would have had to be extended by more years. Furthermore, it would have included a multimedia perspective instead of just a textual analysis, due to the high numbers of videos, photographs and links.

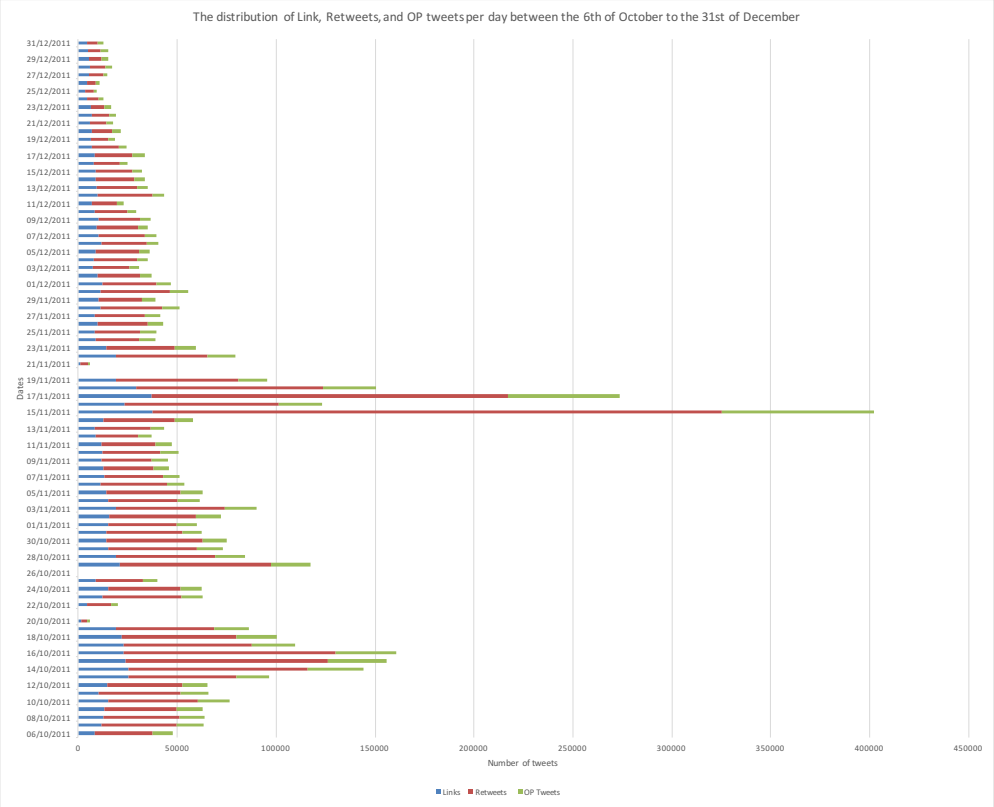

Figure 3: The distribution of Links (including photographs and videos), Retweets, and OP tweets per day between the 6th of October and the 31st of December, based just on the #OWS hashtag

I therefore decided to focus on an even smaller timescale than the three months I had available to me, and instead looked at the last forty days of the movement on the ground. This was both one of the most active periods of the movement, because of the events contained within that time, and was the period that eventually led to OWS' demise. The final quantity of cleaned

tweets between the forty last days was n= 596,003, only including OP tweets: singletons (simple tweets) and mentions. This focus on the OP tweets was adopted for three reasons: first, to focus on the original posters' text, not influenced by metadata such as retweets and favourites, i.e. the original stories of the activists and supporters; second, to avoid discussions around the use of multimedia and linking to the Web; and finally, to reduce the number of tweets to a workable quantity that would make the tracing of narratives and the coding of the stories feasible. Figure 4 below, illustrates the distribution of these two kinds of tweets that comprise the OP tweets dataset, which formed the final working dataset for this thesis.

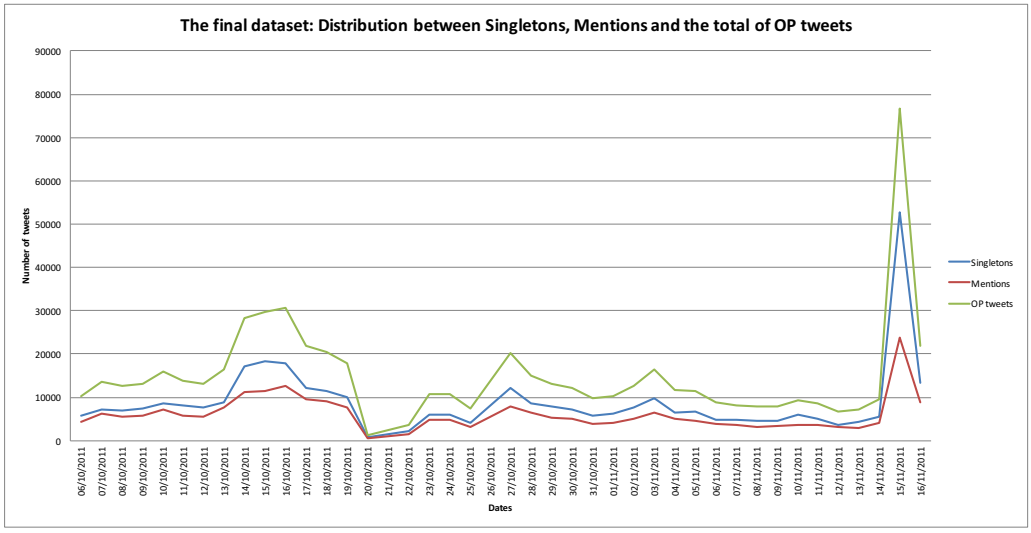

Figure 4: The final working dataset as a distribution between singletons (plain tweets), mentions (tweets mentioning other users, using the @ sign), and the combination of the two as the OP tweets

In order to only focus on the OWS case, I also computationally cleaned the archive by getting rid of the tweets with hashtags referring to other movements outside of Wall Street. The list of cleaned-out hashtags can be found in Appendix 2.

Thinking within the limitations of what we call archive, Shillingsburg focuses on the disadvantages of digital archives. However, in this case I think about social media data not as intrinsically 'estranging.' Indeed, I argue that it does not isolate me more than the researcher who has less data or resources.

‘Textual histories’ do not necessarily offer a clearer view into methods, or a more straightforward analysis of the data. Every piece of research depends on different parameters. Digital archives, similar to print archives, are part of history, and will eventually ripen as collection-tools, before deteriorating. I believe that a social media archive cannot be something that is unedited, rearranged, or compiled without a specific goal in mind. As Palmer argues in relation to thematic research:

> Collections of all kinds can be open-ended, in that they have the potential to grow and change depending on commitment of resources from collectors. Most thematic collections are not static. [….] Moreover, individual items in a collection can also evolve because of the inherent flexibility (and vulnerability) of "born digital" and transcribed documents. (Palmer, 2004: 351)

The edited archive in use here then, which only focuses on the #OWS hashtag, is sometimes partially computerised before going through emplotment (the following step), as an improved version of the big dataset. Its flexibility and implicit strength is the fact that as an archive the vulnerability of disappearing tweets and deleted content is avoided. This means that the archive includes almost all the tweets under #OWS, and even if users delete their tweets, close their accounts or change their usernames, the dataset will remain the same because it has been downloaded as a text file and saved on a personal hard drive. Nonetheless, the fact that this data collection is not static opens up discussions about the ethical use of this data, which I will talk about later in this chapter. To make this archive even clearer, I deployed NTA to emplot the stories/tweets of the key days (or more active days) into micro-narratives.

4.5.4 Emplotment of micro-narratives

The key fourth step–emplotment—required structuring, identifying, and defining the micro-narratives, told through tweets. It followed a repetitive and time-consuming process in which I worked through all the tweets, with

the aim of creating plots into which the themes of stories—the micro-narratives—could be categorised in the same qualitative and discursive detail.

Working with each individual tweet led to a number of micro-narratives and plots, which were later thematically categorised in narratives. This step underlines how NTA consolidates quantitative and qualitative strategies: I did selective, qualitative close readings to unveil the themes of stories formed on Twitter, while the data had been quantitatively selected based on its characteristics earlier. If I found that a tweet under analysis belonged to more than one plot, the tweet was included in both plots. In my view, a story can add to multiple micro-narratives; it is not exclusive to one story or a single narrative. In this categorisation stage then, the different meanings of the story can be brought up and used in the narrativised step that follows. Fundamentally, this fourth step of selection was a standard qualitative coding and thematic creation based on the content of the tweet and its similarity in relation to other tweets, which implied placing 'like with like' (Morse and Field, 1995).[26]

In its conceptual model, this approach would begin with no hypotheses. However, noting the large dataset and the seeking of social movement

[26] Apart from the thematic analysis of Twitter narratives, I have also at times analysed the larger narratives of OWS on Twitter in terms of characters, setting, plot, and action. As parts of this thesis will show, sometimes it was necessary to go back into the smaller elements of the stories and micro-narratives (e.g. their main characters) in order to unpack the features that gave rise to the dominant narratives of the movement on Twitter. Going back to this thesis's main focus —the ways in which people make and use stories to interpret OWS on Twitter—sometimes the people themselves (the individual users) or the setting of the narrative becomes central to the interpretation of some narratives, while in other cases narratives have a clear aim and do not demand a further analysis of setting, plot, or characters. In those other complicated cases, Twitter narratives as the interpretive devices through which users represent themselves and their experiences to themselves and to others on the platform, make the users, setting and plot, integral to their cohesion. The narrative analysis aspect of NTA therefore views narratives as social products that are produced on Twitter by users in the context of the movement's social, historical, and cultural location (the OWS movement as experienced in New York in 2011 by Twitter users, as the result of the economic crisis). This gives to the users a setting, a plot, and some form of agency with regards to their role in the development of the narrative. Indeed, this becomes central to an interpretation of the narrative's function.

narratives, I first hand-coded 10,000 tweets from a randomised sample of my dataset. This pilot analysis of the data informed my assumption that people tend to tweet more when the following apply:

- There is an active event on-the-ground;
- There are police involved;
- They are influenced greatly by mainstream media reports;
- They tend to use different ways to talk about themselves as individuals and as part of a group.

Furthermore, all these aspects change depending on the day or the urgency of event taking place.

Microsoft Excel worked structurally and analytically for my qualitative analysis. In some cases, where I wanted to focus on specific expressions of identity, for example, I deployed a partially computerised analysis of the dataset.[27] Since I was focusing on the expressions of 'I' and 'we'—personal and collective notions of identity—I first divided the dataset into the tweets including 'I' and tweets including 'we.' If the tweet included both, it was considered as part of both narratives. Each tweet was inserted in a single line on the fourth column (D), along with the date, time and username it sourced from. Column E was used to insert the codes for each kind of story. In the Table below, I provide an example of how I coded the first 11 tweets including the word 'I'. For the narrative of personal stories, codes were divided into seven kinds of stories:

1. Internalising their position;
2. Receiving and broadcasting information;
3. Questioning events and actions;
4. Empathising with OWS;
5. Valuing OWS importance;

[27] The process of partially computerising data was only deployed when I was looking into specific words. For example: Obama, NYPD, police, etc. They were later coded again to make sure they referred to the same kind of story. Essentially, all tweets included in this thesis were manually coded, read and re-read, to make sure that their discursive analysis was thorough.

6. Making recommendations; and

7. Calling for action.

If a tweet did not fit in any of the codes, it was given number 0 and discarded from the dataset. In this way, data was coded in Excel and then divided again and analysed further to visualise it into graphs that can be found in Chapters 5 to 8.

Date	Time	Username	Tweet	Code
14/10/2011	00:00	AgentOrchid	Take heart #ows & other's facing eviction. I am sure that the Red Coats tried to stop American colonists, farmers, common folk from Assembly	5
14/10/2011	00:00	damn_it_Ethel	@JoAnneMoretti I will say that you are wrong and leave it at that. I've been watching the live streams I know whats up. :) #ows	3
14/10/2011	00:02	eclecticbrotha	OK, is it just me or is there a simultaneous campaign to oust #ows protesters across the country. I've been on/ off net all day but seems so?	2
14/10/2011	00:03	nmmi_nut	#OccupyDenver I will stay up to watch livestreams/twitter updates, I can't be there with you but I won't leave you alone. I <3 you all #OWS	4
14/10/2011	00:03	arlasko	Time for me to take my medicine at get to bed, sleep well all, except for TweetDeck and #OWS #Suckage	4
14/10/2011	00:03	GermanoLeila	Here we have a group of young people fighting peacefully to restore economic sanity in America. I wish you safety tonight #OWS. You inspire.	4
14/10/2011	00:03	Mruff221	@MartianJudge I can only say this to Fox News #Ows is cleaner then most of the parks in NYC. It's simply rubbish this sanitation canard.	2
14/10/2011	00:05	wskrs	Goodnight, everyone. #ows people - be safe! I can't join you, but I applaud all of you amazing people.	5
14/10/2011	00:05	spacetimeltd	@VidConWorldCEO These songs of freedom...all I ever had,,,it is a flower I hav received.We are with you, Occupiers, all. #OccupyDenver #OWS	4
14/10/2011	00:05	dizzyswank	@ellamorton Good luck! You're like the daughter I never had! #concerned #ows ;)	0

Table 1: A sample of how emplotment of the micro-narratives was done

In this example, I am suggesting a new perspective in which we can see the kind of textual archival approach this thesis employs working, for social media research both qualitatively and quantitatively. I thus stand against the critical words of Peter Shllingsburg who asserted that: ‘information overload has set in. The comprehensiveness of the electronic archive threatens to create a salt, estranging sea of information, separating the archive user from insights into the critical significance of textual histories’ (Shillingsburg, 2006: 165).

By isolating the important micro-narratives within the archive I was then able to go through the tweets of the more active days, the key days, set apart their micro-narratives and later make a case for how these micro-narratives created unique and complex narratives for OWS on Twitter. This process emerged from my conceptualisation of the tweet as a story that has a relationship with a group of tweets as a micro-narrative. Later, these mico-narratives transform into narratives, a feature that was used as part of the

overall analytic aims of this study. These were working through what was computationally traceable—the general discourses of the OWS' story on Twitter—to the smaller discourses in tweets forming narratives. For example, the media ecology narrative of OWS was constructed through five micro-narratives: mainstream media as biased against OWS; MSM imposing a blackout on the movement's coverage; mainstream media channels spreading misinformation about the movement; complimenting journalists' coverage; applauding media coverage; and the turn towards alternative media and alternative broadcasting tools.

Finally, for this fourth step I applied open and axial codes to locate reappearing themes in the Twitter data, so as to understand similarities and differences among the themes/micro-narratives. Namely, I generated a 'within case' and 'cross-case analysis' (Crewel, 2007: 75) to offer more focused concepts related to narratives and social movements. With a view to reflecting this comparative analysis, each chapter of this thesis focuses on a specific narrative rather than on events taking place in OWS. For example, I read all the tweets on the 15th of November and coded all those tweets accusing the NYPD of violence with the label: 'reaction against police brutality'. The coded tweets formed the micro-narrative of 'reacting against police brutality', which was later added to the 'police violence' narrative during the narrativisation process. The thematic analysis coding did not focus on just the primary theme of each tweet. For example, a tweet could be considered as being part of both a micro-narrative against police violence and a micro-narrative expressing their identity in relation to the movement. This multi-level coding allowed for a story (a tweet) to not be defined and excluded within specific frames, but instead afforded tweets with a fluid character; a character that social media communication is governed by.

4.5.5 Narrativisation

The fifth step–narrativisation—was a qualitative process based on discursive and thematic analysis. In NTA, the idea of narrative analysis is applied not to

just words, but to the ways themes of stories and plots can be put together to create a narrative. Narrativisation was again a qualitative analysis that took place in Excel. Themes of stories that referred to the same reaction, event or emotion (the codes) were put together into one narrative. The end result of this analytical step was *themed stories*, which emerged in sets of narratives. These narratives unveiled the core dynamics of the subject matter and traced the importance of events or reactions, based on the qualitative analysis of these narratives. For instance, if one narrative had many more tweets attached to it, it gained more importance than the one that had fewer.

These same elements were then analysed in relation to two elements: first, the progression of the movement across time, and second, its evolution through one of its social variables, including the stage of the movement, and the general mood for or against the movement. This text-based analysis was also used to study ways in which *certain narratives* occurred throughout different days. Hence, I eventually collocated patterns specific to and partly definitive of the movement's participants, the behaviours exhibited in specific contexts, and used during certain occasions. These narratives were later visualised through Excel functions.

4.5.6 Visualisation

The final, and sixth step, of NTA entailed the visualisation of the narratives. This made clearer the links and comparisons between the themed micro-stories of each narrative, and the ties, differences and similarities between the narratives themselves. Drawing from discourse theory, we can interpret the narratives as discursive spaces where a number of micro-narratives are placed in connection to each other (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). The discourse can hence be analysed as a set of different narratives.

4.5.7 The benefits of NTA

This six-step analysis of Twitter content is a true erasure of the quantitative and qualitative divisions in the research field of social media data, making

both qualitative and quantitative methods work in collaboration. Indeed, when these approaches work together, they can address each other's weaknesses and enhance their strengths, whilst adapting to unveil the social media storytelling dynamics of social movements.

NTA's ability to make the fragmented story of OWS on Twitter coherent was further enhanced by its distinctiveness as a methodological tool that could divide that same story into the micro-narratives and the smaller stories of OWS. This distinctiveness enabled me to capture not solely the temporal but also the network dynamics of these stories and micro-narratives. As the six steps of this methodology have shown, NTA brings together traditional narrative analysis and network analysis with network and narrative theory. However, NTA varies from SNA (Social Network Analysis) or DNA (Dynamic Network Analysis) in that it is concerned more with the textual and discursive networks, and contains varying levels of network narrative structures. For example: one narrative may be formed through a network of a thousand tweets, while another may be formed through a hundred tweets. Hence, the main network feature of NTA is that it takes social interactions on Twitter and discursive networks of the content transmitted through the platform into account. NTA, in this respect is at times tied to temporal analysis. Live events happen on-the-ground, but temporal analysis is not exclusive to it, as changes in the discourses and communication of OWS on the platform more often than not result from new elements that have network features. These include strong ties between specific Twitter users, stories blending with each other in a discursive network, or specific users becoming more prolific. In essence, some users gain more Twitter fame than others in the story.

This approach appeals to and includes an extensive and broad report of Twitter's multiple authors/readers, and narratives for the OWS story, thus allowing me to convey a comprehensive account regarding the Twitter story about the movement. This is supported by data from interviews, which reveals more than just the construction of a story through 'spoken narratives',

'life stories', or 'journalistic narratives' (Lambrou in Lambrou and Stockwell, 2007; Georgakopoulou, 2007; Norrick in Quasthoff and Becker, 2005). Working with SMN empirical data offered me the chance to present a powerful account of narrative architecture that suggested alternative formations to the traditional single closed sequences of narrative logic. Instead, this allowed me to unveil the multiplicity of narrative paths on Twitter and to unearth a story for OWS that was open and formed through diverse narratives, such as the collective identity narrative and Twitter abuse narrative (Bell, 2010; Ryan, 2012). The OWS story on Twitter was not discrete but distributed, not fully coherent but fragmented; but it was intensely socially situated.

4.5.8 A return to the basics: Combining the online with the on-the-ground

The analytic approach (NTA) I described in the previous sections developed from a computational textual analysis of tweets throughout the 40 last days of the movement's life on-the-ground, and focused on three primary characteristics of tweets: their type, their theme/ kind of story, and their narrative function. I have suggested that a focus on the smaller elements of the movement's communication on Twitter allowed me to trace the differences across the Twitter communication of supporters and protesters of the movement, as well as to consider other aspects, such as the movement's influencers and social media ecology. This thesis asked if a new notion of contemporary social movements may arise through the use of social media, and examined it with the help of Excel. What surfaced through the computational analysis of the tweets' frequency under #OWS was that Twitter activity was bound around a series of syndetic events/protests that were arranged into a larger online and on-the-ground network, through which the whole story arose.

Given that OWS had a causal relationship with Twitter, I expanded the narratives beyond Twitter. Thus, I endeavoured to link multiple narratives of

shared experience with offline routines and interviews, (Giugni, McAdam, and Tilly, 1999; Tarrow and Tilly, 2009), which are known to form what we call 'distributed narratives' (Walker, 2013), or 'transmedia storytelling' (Jenkins, 1992; Dena in Page, 2010). This SMN story thus cannot avoid an analysis that will include strategies investigating composed and small-scale stories. This data was finally interpreted through narrative and social theories, supported by semi-structured interviews. Before going into the narratives in Chapters 5 to 8, I will briefly go through the Ethics and Limitations of this study and offer a conclusion to the conceptual and methodological chapter.

4.6 Ethics & Limitations

Over the past five years, I have been involved in a number of discussions and arguments regarding the responsibility researchers and organisations share when dealing with social media data. A lot of these discussions focus on the risk aspects embedded in data management practices, including hacking and the ethics behind using the data. Included in this are cases in which researchers had to handle data with care or ended up not using it for ethical reasons (Ess, 2016; Crawford, 2013; Buchanan and Ess, 2008; Markham and Baym, 2008; Bruckman, 2006). Most of these discussions are not pertinent to my data collection or analysis, but I will make specific reference to those parts of the argument that are relevant and influence this thesis. This section will reflect on the ethical challenges of the collection, analysis and presentation of Twitter data. I will also bring in some discussion regarding the ethical measures taken for conducting the interviews.

4.6.1 First step of the Ethics process

As a first step in completing and securing the ethics process for this PhD, I had a meeting with the Research Ethics Manager at King's College London in early 2016, in order to discuss the use of social media content in my thesis. At the time of my research, KCL was working on completing a flowchart that would help internet researchers to determine to what extent the data they wanted to use would or would not endanger participants in their studies, or

pose risks to the users and the researchers themselves (Holmes, 2009). Other than that, KCL did not have a social media policy or ethics process regarding social media content. Thus, I was not obliged to follow any social media protocol at the time this thesis was being written. However, taking into consideration the ethical dimensions of social media data—as personal communication tokens—I have decided to take into consideration the following parameters for my data:

1. I am using Twitter content dated from 2011. Tweets that have since been deleted, by authors who deleted their accounts, or made their account private, will not be used in my thesis.
2. The fact that these tweets were tweeted under a specific hashtag designates that the user was aware that he or she was tweeting as part of a public discussion. This is something that gives me a certain degree of freedom to use their tweets in my research.
3. Since my research is based on discourse analysis, changing the content or hiding the usernames of the Twitter users will change the content of my analysis and thus my results. I realise username analysis was not part of this thesis' aims, but in certain cases usernames give a decisive contextual meaning to the tweets.
4. Mainstream media use Twitter content daily without any permission, which is probably making the users aware that their tweets are in the public domain, and that thus they may be used by researchers/MSM.

These parameters were discussed and agreed upon with the ethics director at KCL and the Postgraduate and Research Committee (PARC) of my department at KCL, Culture, Media and Creative Industries.

4.6.2 New spaces, new ethical questions

Collecting data from rather newly formed platforms brings up new questions, and Twitter is one of those spaces where specific analytical practices are still

being formed. This ambiguity of approaches may still exist due to the lack of appropriate infrastructure or practical applications of social media data. For example, researchers who come from a background with no technical knowledge of the effects of social technologies on data collection have abruptly entered the technology field with tools that sometimes are not secure or built under ethical parameters. Similarly, universities are quickly coming to terms with the benefits social media can bring to research, but in the meantime it appears that they are not as aware of the risks that come with them. Second, Twitter is unpredictable and possesses different volumes of openness: because of the privacy settings on Twitter, if a user keeps his or her account public, then one's account can be accessed by everyone. Increased attention to certain accounts or tweets may happen inadvertently due to others' actions (e.g. retweeting or quoting their tweets). When an account is 'out in the open', there is very little a user can currently do to change it.

Along the same lines, due to this openness, getting 'consent' from these users is a complicated task on Twitter; a task that becomes much more complex if the users are not aware of Twitter's 'public' openness (Watson et al., 2007). Despite signing acceptance of public rights, Twitter has in its usage a predominantly private feel, creating for the user a space of ambivalence that rests between voyeurism and exhibitionism. Following boyd's and Crawford's (2012) argument, this user behaviour is problematic when it comes to the role of researchers, because they have to 'justify their actions as ethical simply because the data are accessible [and] the process of evaluating the research ethics cannot be ignored simply because the data are seemingly public' (boyd and Crawford, 2012: 672). In my opinion though, Twitter's content can be read freely by anyone if the user has chosen to have a public profile. By signing off a Terms & Conditions service, a user recognises the publicity of the space and the digitisation of our society should already have made them aware of the openness of the platform (Turkle, 1997; Castells, 2009).

This thesis uses all the content of the tweets along with the usernames of the participants. This follows the 'non-intrusive web-based research' model introduced by Kitchin (2008: 15), since it does not interrupt the organic nature of Twitter or the community researched here. Taking into consideration Twitter's 'moral architecture,' which has classified several principles for how developers should make use of their API and generated data, as part of their API usage terms, this research was carried out subject to the site's terms of use. These are summarised in four principles: (1) do not surprise users; (2) respect user privacy; (3) do not create or distribute spam; and (4) be a good partner to Twitter. These principles aim to control the way any software applications could potentially take advantage of the data afforded to them via the APIs and create content that could impersonate users or even collect the data of private accounts.

In addition to following the site's terms and conditions, this research also followed the recommendations from the Association of Internet Research (AoIR) Ethics Working Committee (2012).[28] At a later stage of my research, NatCen published their own report on 'Research using Social Media; Users' Views',[29] which corresponded widely with my ethical parameters, specifically in relation to avoiding undue harm and user expectations. In their words:

> If a user intended for their post to be widely accessible or public (for example on Twitter or LinkedIn where profiles tend to be open to a very wide potential audience), then there was a view that a researcher would not necessarily need to gain consent to use it. This is because the user, by posting publicly online, implies that they are surrendering ownership. (Beninger, Fry, Jago, Lepps, Nass and Silvester, 2014: 30)

[28] See: <http://aoir.org/reports/ethics.pdf>
[29] See: <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/media/282288/p0639-research-using-social-media-report-final-190214.pdf>

As the last step to keeping my research within an ethical framework, I followed the framework created by key scholars of social media data during a workshop held in February 2016. This was subsequently published in a report called 'Social Media Research: A Guide to Ethics'[30] shown in Figure 5 (Townsend and Wallace, 2016) (2016: 8).

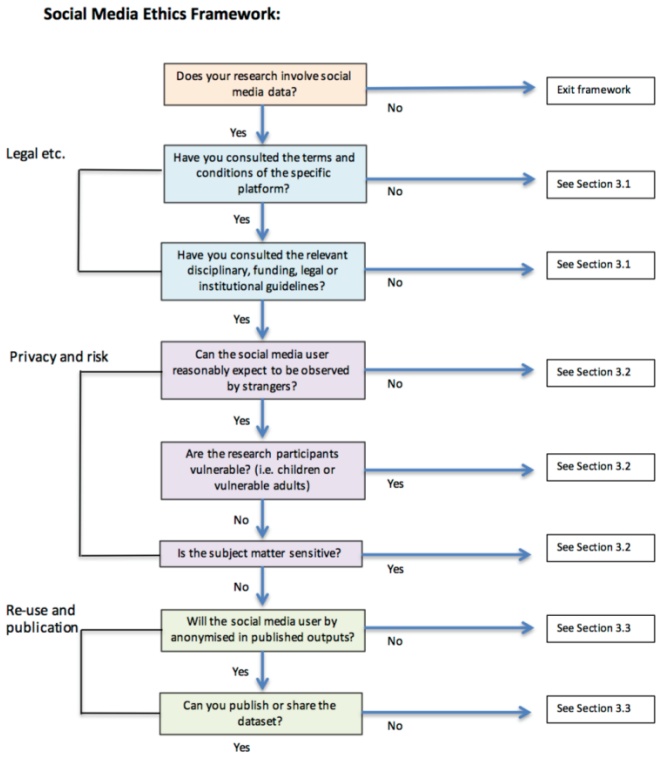

Figure 5: The Social Media Ethics Framework put forwards by Townsend and Wallace.

There is no apparent or easy way to solve these ethical issues, and each of them needs to be scrutinised independently in the context of social media research. Too much variety exists in social media cultures, values and structures, to choose one way to do this kind of research. What is ethical for one community may not be ethical for the next and what works for one case may not work for another (Hair and Clark, 2007). The AOIR guidelines, as well as the rest of the reports, while being truly valuable, cannot be applied concretely to all cases in the same way. Therefore, the approach I use here is

[30] See <http://www.dotrural.ac.uk/socialmediaresearchethics.pdf>

specific to the OWS case study, as are the methodology and the research questions. I believe this was the only open, pluralistic policy I could follow in the face of ethical issues, while agreeing with AoIR and Ess's (2009) position that in open-access forums informed consent may not always be requested or required. What follows are the strategies I used, as I attempted to navigate the questions and challenges posed to me, whilst being aware of the possibilities and limitations of this technology. Therefore, I follow what Flicker et al. (2004) have suggested as a useful strategy: being constantly aware of the importance of ethical conduct by always keeping in mind the guidelines available to me.

4.6.3 Limitations of using social media data & Interviews

Focusing on social media data for the study of social movements also has its limitations. First, studying social media content is often based on the idea that by looking into social media communication, one can decode the influence of social media on social movements. Second, analysing social media narratives does not take into account the ways these media are limiting for some and open to others; not everyone uses social media, not all activists use social media, and social movements often do not depend on social media, even if they use them widely. In the context of this research, the focus on the stories told on social media would ignore the endeavours activists and other OWS actors had to push for on-the-ground. Hence, it is essential to take into consideration how social media are not to be assumed as the primary factor of OWS. This is not to suggest that the concept of framing is not informing this research. Instead, while framing research has focused on psychological and behavioural processes, this research focuses on the narrative processes *inside* social media, which also surface in interviews.

4.6.3.1 Right to withdraw

My interview participants held the right to withdraw at any time. This was explained to the participants both orally and in written form throughout the research process, and there was no pressure on the participants to

participate in this research. It was made clear that they were under no obligation to do so and that there would be no negative consequences for them if they did not assist the research.

Participants were able to withdraw any data they had contributed to the project where it was possible. The procedure of withdrawal would follow the deletion of their interview from the encrypted digital folder and the deletion of any personal information gathered regarding them. The information sheet given to all interviewees made clear that the right to withdraw extended beyond actual participation and covered withdrawal of all their research data. It also mentioned that withdrawal of data would no longer be possible after the end of the fieldwork, which was dated the 7th October 2014. Fortunately, no participants asked to be withdrawn from this project.

4.6.3.2 Ethical issues for the interviews

Similar to the social media data, I took considerable ethical considerations for the semi-structured interviews I conducted. This research was made possible by and complied with the Ethics Policy set out by King's College London. By signing a consent form, I acquired consent from all interviewees. Whilst I primarily believed that my interviewees would want to keep their identities secret, and therefore set their anonymity as a default, most of them wanted to make their names known. In those cases where the interviewees wanted to be anonymised, I used a different name instead of theirs to secure their anonymity. All of the interviewees were also familiar with the nature of the research, through the information sheet I provided them with before our interview took place (Appendix 1). This information sheet was either sent to them by email, or was given to them before the interview took place. The interviews were recorded on a digital recorder or through Skype. The recordings will be kept by me and will be destroyed within the period of two years after the submission of this thesis.

Some of my interviewees were concerned about the ethical consideration of

my position as a researcher studying and analysing social movement data for my personal interest, and for the purpose of obtaining a PhD. I recognise the sentiments of offence coming from certain activists, who argue that social researchers are studying 'their movement' as outsiders, without truly believing in the movement or the activists themselves. I fully recognise the reasons behind these concerns, and tried to minimise any concerns relating to my role as a researcher.

It is important though to remember that interviews are not neutral happenings, but are socially constructed research structures usually originating from a researcher's point of view (Miller and Glassner, 2004: 125). They result from a contextually grounded process between interviewer and interviewee, ruled by hierarchical power dynamics (Kvale, 1996, p. 126; Wengraf, 2001: 2). I have, however, tried to address the limitations of semi-structured interviews within my method, by being aware of their existence and working on the questions posed, based on my second dataset, to strengthen the reliability of the data (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000: 336).

4.7 Analysing stories, micro-narratives, and narratives

This thesis takes an interest in the storytelling processes of individuals and groups. Therefore, the two had to be examined separately. To do this, tweets in the #OWS dataset were divided into three kinds. From micro to macro, these are: 1. tweets as stories; 2. groups of tweets with the same theme as micro-narratives; 3. groups of micro-narratives as a narrative. By using these three levels instead of the usual frame of the two levels of analysis, namely the micro level that focuses on the individuals and the macro level that focuses on aggregates (Knorr and Cicourel, 1981; Calhoun et al., 2007), I moved towards Latour et al.'s (2012) argument that 'the whole is always smaller than its parts.' Indeed, they argue that there is a meso-level between the micro of the individual and the group as the aggregate (Latour et al., 2012). Using the analytical framework of NTA, I offer a more flexible framework in which OWS can be placed. Likewise, it offers the probability of

multiple narratives appearing and therefore multiple conceptualisations materialising, which rigidly define characteristics and identities for the movement. I believe that the six steps of NTA were more flexible in this context and offered an effective way of qualitatively analysing the tweets and bringing out the narratives of the movement's story.

These steps were used as analytical thematic categories to differentiate social movement narratives for OWS. I also recognise that individuals could, and were, participating in multiple micro-narratives across narratives and acknowledge that the ties between narratives were overlapping and manifold. Nonetheless, the three stages offered an analytical framework that defined OWS as a social movement structured through multiple narratives; differentiated micro-narratives within OWS, as well as placing individuals (either activists or supporters) as protagonists in the micro-narratives and often in the narratives. The diverse elements dispersed across a range of narratives, organising themselves into different micro-stories, where the story of the movement unfolded. They also began to tell a story about Twitter presence in the movement. Along these lines, this thesis accumulates the story by moulding 'fragmented moments into a pattern, a plot' (Kearney, 2002: 4). The interwoven stories of Twitter, which developed into micro-stories, not only allowed different narratives to emerge, but also unearthed the links between different narratives from the numerous twitterers.

Exploring storytelling as a practice that bridges cultural and political engagement, I define social media storytelling as a shared activity in which individuals and communities contribute to the telling, retelling, and remixing of the OWS' narratives. I hence examine the ways in which social media storytelling has become a core skill for contemporary activism, affording activists with the ability to translate deep social concerns into compelling narratives that help the public to frame and act on their understandings of OWS. Thus, this methodology provides a bottom-up, text-driven analysis of the OWS story, and simultaneously challenges new classifications attached to

narratology. Indeed, it can be used as a path to accessing a new understanding of the world through new narrative forms. These classifications include multiple narrators and characters existing in the same narrative space, recounting the same story through different perspectives. Following Gibson's (1996) definition of the postmodern narrative, where the 'narrative space is now plastic and manipulable,' Twitter becomes 'heterogeneous, ambiguous, pluralised' 1996: 27). Thus, Twitter emerges as a space where a pluralised co-tellership can take place.

PART II. The Empirical Contributions

In telling the story of OWS, the empirical chapters that follow (Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8) are all of equal importance to the story of the movement, with emphasis falling on the evaluation of key events through micro-narratives. This grants more importance to key actions and turning points, as the processes that form the movement's story. The high speed with which information is spread on Twitter, provides us with fresh material against which to examine the structures and workings of the social movement's development, while interview material works as a supplementary, supportive, and informative element to the Twitter stories. In the chapters that follow, micro-narratives and narratives come in many shapes and serve many functions.

In Chapter 5, mainstream media reports on OWS, which negatively influence the narrative of the movement's causes, are seen as facilitating an affective, moral, response on Twitter, while at the same time marking Twitter as a key tool in the communication practices, processes, and dynamics of the movement. As I will explore in chapter 6, in the case of violence against OWS on Twitter, storytelling comes under the episodic division of a narrative about violence. This narrative examines how specific events manage to form the narrative of Twitter abuse against OWS, so that the spilling of specific micro-narratives into bigger narratives made the eviction of OWS from Zuccotti Park more publically acceptable. The theme of violence continues in Chapter 7, which investigates the stories surrounding OWS' eviction and ways in which the users' ability to endlessly update and tell the story of what was happening on the ground became a source of instantaneous storytelling. This unveiled a narrative against violence, and strengthened the notions of OWS as a movement for social change. Finally, Chapter 8 shows that stories on Twitter form an identity for the movement that goes beyond collective identity, towards a shared collective and multifaceted identity, which is

formed through a number of identity micro-narratives.

What is also important to stress here is that Twitter was the primary social media ecology of the movement. This is not to say that OWS did not appear on any other social media platforms. Indeed, it was present and widely discussed on platforms such as Facebook, Reddit, YouTube and Tumblr. However, there was a tendency from my interviewees to make more specific references to Twitter rather than Facebook as their go-to platform. For instance, Aaron said:

> I am not even on Facebook myself – and I didn't use Twitter at all before Occupy. But it was the best way to get news about what was going on, and up to the minute news, truths about what was going on, and see how many lies corporate media were spreading. Facebook was more complicated than Twitter. We could 'manipulate' Twitter to our favour, make tweets go viral, and create Twitter campaigns by coordinating people to tweet at the same time under the same hashtag. Or we could instantly make an announcement that would usually reach more people than on Facebook.

Along the same lines, when I asked Shawn whether he preferred Twitter or Facebook to communicate with other OWS activists, his response was:

> Look, it was not about whether I preferred one over the other, but most of us were using Twitter to talk to each other, inform others about the actions and the working groups's aims and needs. Facebook had a different functionality for me. Facebook was good for posting photos or calls for action or writing those long posts of reflecting back to what had happened during the day— especially after the NYPD's interventions.

Hence, the OWS activists and protesters largely relied on social media platforms, whether it was Twitter, Facebook, or other platforms. The choice of focusing on the social media ecology of Twitter for this thesis however was both methodological and empirical: methodologically, as I have discussed in

Chapter 3, Twitter was more accessible and appropriate to answer my research questions; empirically, the majority of the activists and protesters I interviewed considered Twitter a more intimate and instantaneous platform than Facebook, one that helped OWS more and that was more useful to them than Facebook. Evidently, as social media networks become core elements of social movements, what becomes clearer in these chapters, is the fact that we cannot conceptualise social movements through networks or social media ties alone. Rather we should use analytical concepts such as storytelling to expose the discourses that form movements on social media.

5. The media ecology shift: Ephemeral Media Narratives

This first analytical chapter builds from interviews and examines OWS' relations to mainstream media and the movement's shift to Twitter as their tool to oppose mainstream media's bias, misinformation, and misrepresentation of the movement. Drawing on the analytical framework of NTA, I first use interview material to introduce the context of this chapter, before moving into the analysis of the Twitter content. More specifically, this chapter is divided into three parts, all of which together build the media ecology of the movement. Here, I use the term *ecology*, following Mercea's, Iannelli's and Loader's (2016:280) argument that,

> the chief merit of the concept of "ecology" is that it underscores the need to emplace inter-connectedness as its origins, forms, implications and valorizations are pondered. […] Therefore, it is coextensive with many other systems, which stand apart from it in one or more respects.

This chapter will look into this inter-connectedness in three parts. The first part of the chapter looks into the mainstream media circumstances that led OWS to rely more on Twitter than other social media to build its media ecology. This includes the role of the OWS' media team and the 'protest paradigm' narrative adapted by the mainstream media against OWS. The second part of the chapter delves into the reasons OWS turned to social media as their main representative media. For this second stage of the media ecology discussion, I examine how OWS adapted 'damage control' as their social media strategy. Finally, I turn to Twitter data to investigate the reactions against mainstream media on Twitter, first in general and then by specifically looking into the eviction day as a key event. Livestreaming commentary on Twitter and the formation of leading characters will inform further this last part of the chapter. By starting the discussion of OWS' story

on Twitter from its 'end-point', the eviction, I reflect on what the movement came to finally *mean* for its supporters, by looking into the alternative ways Twitter was used during fast-paced and urgent events. The micro-narratives building the movement's media ecology will show the movement's *purpose* and *processes*, setting the scene for the chapters to follow. In this chapter the analysis will mostly investigate the characteristics of the narrative, making specific claims about main characters, settings, and the plot. Towards the end of the chapter, the analysis will also touch upon the thematic analysis of the media ecology narrative of OWS on Twitter.

5.1 Moving from Mainstream Media representations to a Social Media Ecology

In late September 2011, Shawn (teacher, 34) began fixating upon the idea of taking a more practical role in the Occupy Wall Street movement. His experience in communications, naturally attached to the media team, which had been set up by the General Assembly a few days earlier. The media team, as a group of people largely responsible for keeping the communication channels between mainstream media and the movement alive, while at the same time supporting others who managed social media and webpages, had numerous communication tasks to fulfil. Shawn shifted between training people on how to respond to questions posed during live-TV interviews, to replying to dozens of mainstream media's emails asking for comments and clarifications. During a really busy afternoon, while replying to an email to The Huffington Post, Shawn was informed that CNN instantly needed to interview someone live on TV. Concerned that if they had not grabbed this chance they would lose their chance in getting mainstream media coverage, he quickly chose one of the newcomers to the group as the responder, while these thoughts were tormenting his mind:

I don't know what is going to happen if we put this person in front of the camera. I think they are good. I don't fucking know! Let's see what happens.

Shortly after, he would pull that person aside, and fast-track train him, amidst curious passers-by, in one corner of the McDonalds restaurant across the street from Zuccotti Park. Suddenly this person, who had never done press before was on camera on CNN live.

This kind of story, verbalised from interviews I conducted with activists and

protesters, presents a compelling narrative about the media ecology surrounding OWS; a narrative that became even more complicated when the conversation shifted towards the social media side of their media ecology. This was simply because Twitter drew a different picture of the relationship between OWS and mainstream media.

As part of OWS' media ecology, some of the OWS media team's actors were deliberately placed in a position where they had to launch, cultivate, and offer immediate responses to the media that utilised them as sources, similar to Shawn's role. But similar to social movement actors of past movements, OWS activists and supporters produced their own 'lay theories' surrounding mainstream outlets and produced their own media, through websites, social media, and alternative media (McCurdy, 2011). Their own activist media communication, similar to all social communication, relied on the development of media attitudes, and offered insights into the wider framework within which their members interacted (Savolainen, 2008; Reckwitz, 2002). Likewise, those members themselves developed meanings and understandings while interacting with their media ecology by reflecting on how their actions were framed and represented in this kind of ecology (Melucci, 1982/2000). The longer the movement was held and the camp grew, activists displayed a competence in recognising, reflecting upon, and criticising the negative mainstream media rhetoric framing the movement. Much of such reporting was predominantly focused on incidents of violence and anarchy surrounding OWS, which made OWS participants turn to Twitter in order to offer alternative reports that would help them disrupt the negative broadcasts by some media outlets. In Jake's words:

> The way people actually find out what has been going on in the movement was through Twitter accounts and the Facebook pages because mainstream media wouldn't report on it, at all! And so this was growing fast and people hadn't anticipated it. By necessity those were the stories of the movement. Because those were the mediums people found

> out through. And that has been the case mostly with Occupy Wall Street. It started with small accounts and when people became sort of aware about how active the social media team was, they made sure that people were working for the movement and made sure information got out there on time, especially if there was something big happening, and how we are going to space it out and what sort of information we needed to provide.
>
> John, 27, student

In a similar way, Priscilla, who was also one of the people in the media team, argued that traffic on one of OWS' sites (occupywallst.com) and social media more generally, was overwhelming and crucial to raising the visibility of the movement during key marches and actions. The site was both one of the biggest hubs linking Occupy movements around the USA with each other *and* acted as an information hub that offered details, articles, and announcements that were not broadcasted by the mainstream media. As Priscilla noted, when asked whether the site was still popular as an information hub a year after the movement's eviction from Zuccotti Park:

> We have 100,000 people coming in to the site every month. You can't let that go. It's a responsibility at this point, more than anything. We have a few people working on it right now and have people that work the social media tools that we put up for them for free.
>
> Priscilla, 32, web designer

Evidently, activists and their supporters recognised the power of MSM, as Shawn's experience has underlined. But OWS' members were also able to publicly critique and bypass the mainstream media, coordinating their beliefs, mutual understandings, and action through the use of websites, online platforms, and SMNs. In this respect, Jake's, Shawn's, and Priscilla's interviews unveil one more interesting fact about OWS: that OWS' relationship with mainstream media was doubly articulated. On the one hand, they needed mainstream media to report on them and thus *enhance*

their publicity in order to attract more supporters. On the other hand, they had to *fight bad publicity* and 'blackouts' from popular US and European channels. Whilst they endeavoured to act as sources in mainstream media, and to boost their presence across TV networks and newspapers, they also moved neatly through online spaces to produce their own digital media and share their reactions to mainstream media coverage of OWS. This twofold position of OWS activists as 'inter[active] media users' (Livingstone, 2003) allowed OWS—not just the on-the-ground activists, but also their social media supporters—to reconstruct their media ecology through extensive social media presence. This was important for both counter publicity and for developing instrumental strategies: original media reporting, activist recruitment and exposure of their vast supporter base.

5.1.1 Mainstream Media and the 'Protest Paradigm'

A range of media literature argues that our current social structure disregards much more non-official news sources, such as social movement actors, than established institutional and governmental sources (Davis, 2003: 34-35; Hall et al., 1978: 58; Schlesinger, 1990: 70; Seymour-Ure, 1987). While government officials and public figures are being given more airtime as 'credible sources', activists are often forced to use different media practices to counterbalance their chances of getting media publicity, or to raise awareness about their issues through mediated discussions. The perception that mainstream media are 'against' protests and protesters has been discussed in social movements research, which has pointed to: a lack of adequate coverage, and criminalisation or downplaying of the protest and protesters. Many have discussed the 'protest paradigm'—where protests are covered in such means that their central reason is to 'delegitimise, marginalise, and demonise' protest groups (Luther and Miller 2005:80; McFarlane 2003; McLeod and Detember 1999:5). According to Deacon et al. (2007:119), the 'protest paradigm' is merely conveyed and sustained through the 'textual and discursive forms' and 'rhetorical nuances' of the news

articles and reports published related to movements[31].

One would anticipate that OWS would fall into a similar 'protest paradigm'. In spite of some activists' efforts to befriend the mainstream media, most interviewees seemed disillusioned with the press. While George stressed the abundance of biases, Benjamin described journalists as 'sneaky' and mainstream media as 'the spies of financial and political elites'. For instance, Tom brought up a discussion about mainstream media soon into our interview, suggesting that:

> There was a lot of press in NYC, it was very adversarial […] Like the New York Post in NYC is a very conservative newspaper and tabloid, something like the Daily Mirror or something in the UK. The New York Post was very adversarial. They were always searching for trash on people; we had a lot of conservative publications that were searching for things. So you would have moments where people would make mistakes without realising it, or some of it was just people being naive, who didn't realise what they were doing.
>
> Tom, 24, student

At the same time Priscilla attacked what a lot of people considered as friendly actors: the left alternative media, by saying:

> You know, the problem with even the left media is that they basically take a box of facts and then they dump it on your head. And it's not pleasant to read, it's not engaging, and it's like here I'm so smarter than you, you poor person, let me tell you how I can save you. And I'm like fuck you, people don't want to be talked down to like that. They want to be brought along and respected for the lives and movements they lead.
>
> Priscilla, 32, web designer

[31] To date, most research has looked into the 'protest paradigm' by analysing the content of news reports (McFarlane, 2001; Luther and Miller, 2005; McLeod and Detember, 1999), while other social movement studies have drawn on the negativity of media as a supportive element to their research (Bennett 2003: 18; Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993; Monbiot, 2001a; Tilly, 2004: 85).

For protesters, the journalistic standards of most of the media professionals were based on uncovering the 'big story' of the movement, constantly asking for the 'specific political ideology' of the movement and by whom it was created: its leaders. Focusing on the ambiguous characteristics of the movement, as Clay argued, made the press act within discourses of partisanship, rather than objectivity:

> One of the slogans of the movement is "Occupy everything, demand nothing". One of the crazy rhetoric bits of media was "we don't know what they want". And you think, it's called Occupy Wall Street, and it's based where the big banks are, the same ones that have crashed the economy, and really, you can't figure out what our goals and motives are? It was a bizarre gesture and it did make our lives harder.
>
> Clay, 39, professor

The expansion of this perception against mainstream media, as shown by these activists' statements, was firmly founded on some of the OWS' core activists' experiences with mainstream media's coverage of protests they were part of in the past. Yet, they were also a reaction to mainstream media reports. Research about the relationship between non-officials and the media has shown that engaging with the mainstream media is not enough for social movements. Engagement does not automatically produce an accurate representation; especially if the non-official actors are striving for some kind of change (Deacon and Golding, 1994). OWS considered that access to the mainstream media was an essential part of publicising the movement, and thus had built the media team to help endorse their presence in the popular press. However, there were still issues that needed to be overcome in order to have a more workable (or subversive) relationship with mainstream media. John, who was part of the movement's media team claimed:

> Some people were coming to the table with a lot of this baggage of being part of all these countercultural left communities where there would be this disregard: "it's

> the mainstream press, what are we going to do? We are going to be attacked by the mainstream press. I'm not gonna change I'm gonna be who I am." It was very, like, kind of naive thing. And the reason why I say it's naive is because there would be moments of opportunity, that would slip away because somebody would refuse to think strategically. But people were figuring it out as they went.
>
> John, 27, student

Certainly, given the diversity of OWS as regards its protesters' motivations and demands, the causes the movement had embraced, and the broad range through which dissent was conveyed, any generalisations about their media strategy has to be treated with caution. Even though some of the activists considered mainstream media as their enemy, the idea that MSM should cover the protests still remained intact in the minds of those who were in charge of the media team, and in the minds of their wider support groups. This was, however, not always a feasible tactic, since people's inexperience in analysing sources from the events would count as 'official.' Furthermore, a lack of contact with professional journalists caused the reporting of OWS to diminish under other events that were considered more newsworthy. Popular posters representing the OWS protest[32] at first boosted the media's interest in OWS and its protesters, reinforcing the status of OWS as 'provocative'. By assigning OWS with the identity of a 'provocative' group from the beginning, mainstream media wrapped the movement in a cloud of lawlessness and violence, thus belittling the movement's causes and motivations. This follows similar findings from past research, which has highlighted that if during a protest or demonstration incidences of violence break out, albeit minor, then the demonstration is interpreted through the lens of violence, as 'the problem.' This distracts the public eye from the causes that gave rise to the demonstration (cf. Halloran et al., 1970; Cottle, 1998; Deacon and Golding, 1994: 130-135; Gitlin, 1980; Hackett and Zhao, 1994; Luther and Miller,

[32] eg. the Adbusters first poster calling for the occupation, the banners that proclaimed for the 99%, and all the rest of the concise, but tensed slogans written on placards

2005).

Some of the mainstream media's coverage was indeed weak and falsely advertised OWS as having parallels with the Tea Party, thus accusing them of inciting violence, and 'class warfare'. Both became much more palpable when the republican presidential candidate, Mitt Romney, suggested that Occupy Wall Street protests were 'dangerous' and incited 'class warfare'.[33]' Meanwhile, the *New York Times'* writer, Charles Blow, described the movement as 'a festival of frustrations, a collective venting session with little edge or urgency.'[34] Finally, *Fox News* reported that 'The NYPD had taken action to prevent protestors from 'wreaking havoc' on the 17th of September[35]. These examples move from describing the protests as insignificant through to the condescending voice of Blow, to embedding images of chaos in the minds of the readers on *Fox News*. Thus, some journalists had managed to indeed put the emphasis of the conversation on violence and the conflict between protesters and the NYPD, thus enforcing the 'protest paradigm' and moving away from the real reasons the protests took place.[36]

At this point, it is imperative to mention that not all US media were undiversified or partisan, but most of them tended to lean towards their trusted sources and their political temperament, which was usually drawn to sources that leaned to agree with their own agenda (cf., Herman and Chomsky, 1998; DellaVigna and Kaplan, 2006; Kuypers, 2002). In what follows, I discuss the ways in which OWS came to create and extend their

[33] WCVBtv. "Romney On Occupy Wall Street Protests". YouTube. Archived from the original on November 18, 2011. Retrieved October 19, 2011

[34] Blow, C. (2011, September 20). *Op-Ed: Hippies and Hipsters Exhale*. New York Times. Retrieved from <http:// www.nytimes.com/2011/10/01/opinion/hippies-and-hipsters-exhale.html>

[35] News' journalist. (2011, September 17). Demonstrators 'Occupy Wall Street' to Protest Influence of Money on U.S. Politics. FOX News. Retrieved from http://www.foxnews.com/us/2011/09/17/demon- strators-occupy-wall-street-to-protest-influence-money-on-us-politics/fox

[36] These were not the only articles referring to OWS from mainstream media. For further details, refer to the research done here by Laya Liu Linjun Fan: <http://www.kon.org/urc/v11/fan.html>

social media presence, both as an attempt to counter-balance mainstream media reports, and as an effort to put forward clear narratives that could stand against misinformation and injustices spread through MSM. I first begin discussing the means through which OWS activists and supporters responded to mainstream media reports, and how they strategized and pivoted around and within media communication. I then turn the focus to analysing the ways in which Twitter participants responded during specific events. I look specifically into the ways in which OWS stands between mainstream media and the concept of 'blackout', the creation of leading characters, and the ephemerality of this participatory commentary as it unfolded during the eviction of OWS from Zuccotti Park.

5.1.2 Shifting to a Social Media Ecology

Most of the media outlets did not succeed in fathoming the real character of the movement. The dominance of news values that relied mostly on the idiosyncrasies of the movement, the 'catchy titles' and viral details, diminished the chances the protesters had to convey what they considered valuable through mainstream media. The events that brought OWS to headlines in newspapers and TV news broadcasts focused on narratives of violence and chaos. These highlighted the destruction of property, showing images that only referred to violence and anarchism. However, as Aaron argued, social media use was important in countering these violent narratives:

> I am not even on Facebook myself – and I didn't use Twitter at all before Occupy. But it was the best way to get news about what was going on, and up to the minute news, truths about what was going on, and see how many lies corporate media were spreading.
>
> Aaron, 32, student

In the days that came after the 17th of September, the first march of the movement, the movement showed skill in maintaining their media ecology,

by having an equipped and largely experienced media team that helped people who were reporting and blogging about the movement. OWS exhibited a delicate understanding of the news-making mechanisms of mainstream media organisations, as well as the affordances of new media/social media platforms. Above all, OWS activists knew that they had to disrupt the current state of affairs in New York by upsetting one of the busiest areas of Manhattan, the Financial district, and making their presence visible. They did this so as to attract as many people as possible to the movement, either online or on the ground.

The dominance of social media over the mainstream media, printed press and any other kinds of traditional media such as the radio, in this movement, seems to contradict the 'media pragmatism' (Barker-Plummer, 1995) that was prominent among the media ecologies of past social movements.[37] While on the one hand, the mainstream media, both in the press and on television, allowed activists to talk about their social concerns by interviewing them, visiting the camp, talking to people, and reporting details regarding the protest, on the other hand social media and especially Twitter, caused much more stir and excitement for OWS. As the following sections will show, the cause of this was that mainstream media coverage of the movement withheld or altered information about them, which was shared on the ground. OWS' supporters utilised Twitter to present their own alternative representations of the movement's issues and demands, while at the same time challenging the misinformation spread about the movement.

[37] Here I differentiate social media networks, analogue media/mainstream media, and other digital technologies that helped the printing or broadcasting of alternative and community media. OWS used computers to make leaflets and posters, print the Occupy Times newspaper, post YouTube videos, and more. This physical media material and additional online material offered a much needed media element to the movement. The Occupy Times newspaper, the leaflets they produced, the announcements they made online, as well as other radio and alternative media usage, significantly enhanced and helped the movement. However, here I only focus on the relationship between mainstream media and Twitter to unpack their relationship and show the shift from MSM to SMNs.

Instead, OWS appeared to have acquired high numbers of Twitter supporters. Soon after the movement picked up, and the camp was set, they realised that social media would play a big role in the movement, and thus invested a lot of their effort and human resources in communicating their ideas, issues and concerns through Twitter. Social media became their go-to medium, which bypassed the need for coverage from mainstream media. They could now sidestep mainstream media and convey their information to the public by themselves, as Justin explained when speaking about social media:

> Social media is just the medium of communication for people that are stepping up and saying we want change; we want something different. It's a medium, it's a tool, and a vehicle for people's voices to be heard […] In other words it subverts the official channels of communication that for so long governments and corporations have relied upon in order to get to draw out any other message.
>
> Justin, 35, educator

OWS activists and Twitter supporters recognised the importance of social media and especially Twitter for advancing and transmitting people's support and identification with the movement, and for allowing them to express their own voices. Social media supporters augmented the high numbers of Zuccotti Park based protesters' voices. From this point of view, at the dawn of social movements using Twitter to communicate and organise, the core media value of the movement became their social media communication during the movement's lifetime, but most importantly during key events. Indeed, this combination may well be what helped it evolve into a major social phenomenon.[38]

Altogether, OWS' media ecology was monopolised by two kinds of processes

[38] It is important to stress here that social media cannot be considered, and are not enough, to sustain, build and develop a movement by themselves. In the words of Tilly and Keeble, 'Even in demonstrations and protests that preceded mass media (Tilly, 2004), some sort of 'media dimensions' were 'crucial' (Keeble 2000:119) to the sustainability of the movements, but their element was supportive, not foundational.

that are also evident in my analysis of the interviews and the social media content discussed in the following sections: the mainstream media *actively* and negatively engaging with OWS or blacking out the movement, and social media *reacting* to this coverage or non-coverage from mainstream media. The following section will briefly unpack the ways in which social media was adapted as a 'damage control' mechanism, and then proceed to examine the narratives involved in supporters' efforts on social media to counteract mainstream media coverage.

5.1.3 Adapting 'damage control' as a social media strategy

The above provided some insights into how much activists believed in the importance of media coverage for social movements, by diagnosing their frustration with mainstream media when their coverage is unfavourable and not supportive to the movement's cause. Under these circumstances, OWS employed the use of social media, and specifically Twitter to keep a watchful eye on the media's coverage, and to protect their integrity. According to Manning (1996), Davis (2000), and Deacon (2003), since the late 1980s, union movements have focused their media strategies on intensifying their efforts to scale down damaging media coverage, at the same time as they curtail the negativity breaking out from any adverse coverage. It becomes clear then that contemporary movements' relationship with the media has significantly turned into what we call 'damage control' (Manning, 1996: 52), a deep-rooted communication strategy stemming from trade unionists' learning of harsh lessons, having being scorned by media coverage in the past (O'Neill, 2007*).* This interpretation of social movements' relationship with mainstream media as 'damage control', also applies to contemporary movements such as OWS. The tendency to be cautious of mainstream media, but not axiomatically hostile towards them, conveyed the significance of being genuinely aware of the media's power and choosing to refrain from presenting negative or damaging images for OWS to them. Aaron, who lived in the park for a number of nights, referred specifically to one event where:

> The mainstream media were very quick to say look how irresponsible the social media was being about this, they were just fingering (sic) at people, it was awful. But who really ran with the story was the New York Post. The New York Post had that front page for the murderer, you know? And where they got their information from? The same way they get all their stories from. There was that NYPD guy who gave it. That's how they get every story. But if you look at the actual page it was extremely irresponsible. All the top [social media] posts after that were like "ok, this is how to be careful about your identifying, this is how to match the police data, this how not to go crazy about identifying people" suggesting that the New York Post were doing bad journalism.[39]

According to Aaron, such articles were not published by coincidence. It was, rather a search 'for trash on people', designed to advance the concept of protesters as extremists, radicals or violent individuals, by relying on some reckless statements or behaviour. According to Della Porta and Diani (2006), this 'logic of damage' is closely related to the ways in which journalists target and focus on the acts of damaging property to describe protests. Mainstream media's use of visual material was further augmented by their adverse representation of OWS: photographs of people and banners conveyed a deceptive interpretation of OWS in a compelling and candid way. The above quote also demonstrates how OWS participants regarded mainstream media not as a space of diversified discussion, but more as a social entity, or a power structure that was after them. The implication that there was a line connecting mainstream media and institutional powers, such as the police, was one of the prevalent sentiments amongst the supporters in Zuccotti Park, and it will be developed as a theme in this thesis, both in this chapter and in the later chapters that follow.

The first part of this chapter discussed, through interview material, the shift of OWS away from MSM representation, to social media as their main tool of

[39] The article he refers to can be accessed here: <http://fair.org/blog/2012/07/12/the-broken-link-between-ows-and-a-murder/>

creating their media ecology. The second part of this chapter will show how, similar to the interviews, when OWS Twitter supporters talked about mainstream media, they consistently spoke about the inaccurate portrayal, absence of facts, and the misinterpretation of discourses associated with the financial, cultural, and social issues represented and framed within and by OWS. These issues were for them the main reason that the public image of the movement was flawed. Namely, the approach of mainstream media was nearly without exception negative among Twitter supporters and this attitude lingered even in tweets about positive experiences tows participants had with professional journalists employed by mainstream media outlets. Thus, these journalists were referred to as the exception that confirmed the rule. For the purposes of this chapter, I will analyse the content of tweets referring to mainstream media and decipher how users tweeting under the #OWS hashtag reacted to and reflected on the coverage mainstream media offered to OWS. Furthermore, I will comment on what the stories constructing their narratives were.

5.2 OWS' Twitter Ecology

The NTA analysis of Twitter content uncovered three micro-narratives, which will now be looked at in turn. First, Twitter supporters regarded mainstream media as explicitly biased because of their direct relations with governmental actors and financial corporations. These Twitter users were perceived as having a vested interest in disassociating OWS from the governmental and financial corporations and thus perpetuating a blackout for the movement in mainstream media. A lot of their stories defined mainstream media as partisan because of their relationship with governmental and financial actors who had high stakes in portraying OWS through false representations. Second, Twitter supporters deemed the news-making synergies within and from mainstream media outlets as a restraining agent for OWS, influencing and augmenting a negative and misinformed image for the movement. Those synergies, according to them, rested heavily on the ways in which journalists covered the protests. Hence, in many occasions they pointed towards

specific media outlets and their lines of reporting. Finally, some Twitter supporters praised journalists and smaller and alternative media channels and news-websites that covered them in a more positive light, as political actors who engaged in the development of public discourses about popular issues. There were also some positive reactions to some of the mainstream media's coverage, but the three other angles overpowered them.

In the first part of this chapter I discussed how activists believed that mainstream media were broadly shutting them out and unwilling to spread the 'real message of the movement'. In what follows, I show how these perceptions linked to mainstream media are mirrored in the discussions taking place on Twitter, creating a dominant narrative that augmented the movement's Twitter story. Through the analysis of Twitter content, twitterers seem to recognise specific media and certain journalists as political actors that help OWS to grow and contribute to the unveiling of the true narratives that construct the movement. That said, the dual mood for *and* against media that was prevalent in the interviews was also present in the Twitter reactions to mainstream media coverage in general. Indeed, media were recognised as important allies, yet also as hostile towards the movement.

5.2.1 Reacting to Mainstream Media on Twitter

Contemporary social movements are now required to have an extensive presence on social media in order to reach a wider set of users, populations, influencers, and publics. OWS, similarly, perceived social media as one of the ways to magnify their voice and their numbers, even though, as Justin later stressed: 'people said that the protest was caused by social media. Or started by social media. Which was not true.' Indeed, social media such as Twitter were not the root of the movement; they were rather the megaphone that succeeded to some extent in subverting the mainstream media's logic of violence following OWS. In other words, Twitter was an ally, because it allowed OWS people to express themselves, spread, and expand their narrative against corporate mainstream media, and to elaborate on the

fundamental narratives of the movement which were often fragmentary, or else absent from mainstream media. Some key events supported these perceptions and made the narratives even stronger and more obvious on Twitter.

For instance, on the 6th of October President Obama held a press conference and was asked about Occupy Wall Street. He answered: 'I think it expresses the frustrations the American people feel, that we had the biggest financial crisis since the Great Depression […]'. Obama's response gave hope for a positive coverage of OWS from the mainstream media, who aired the conference. However, the positive sentiment of OWS participants on Twitter, as we will later see, faded away after the big mobilisation on the 15th of October 2011, which mainstream media widely ignored. This sentiment was much more widespread during the eviction of OWS from the park. Looking at the Twitter engagement of OWS supporters and activists during the first two key events — the 6th of October and the 15th of October — Twitter comes to represent a hub through which activists and supporters were able to gain a form of 'direct access' to media and journalists, expressing their impressions on the media coverage of the movement. I will later examine the day of the eviction separately, as one of the biggest, if not the biggest, key event of OWS.

Through the analysis of the tweets tweeted during these two key events, Obama's speech and the 15th of October worldwide mobilisation in support of OWS, five major micro-narratives seem to form the narrative surrounding the media ecology of the movement, as expressed on Twitter: first, the micro-narrative that mainstream media were biased against OWS; second, that MSM were intentionally imposing a blackout on the movement's coverage; third, the micro-narrative of specific mainstream media channels spreading misinformation about the movement; fourth, the micro-narrative complimenting journalists' coverage and applauding smaller media's and alternative media's coverage; and finally, the stories forming the micro-

narrative of a turn towards alternative media and alternative broadcasting tools. The positive part of the narrative was in turn formed by micro-narratives, which complimented the journalists' coverage, and applauded smaller media's and alternative media's coverage, as well as users' turning towards other sources of information and transmission of information, such as livestreams. These micro-narratives were structured through 2126 stories/ OP tweets, spread through the two days — 661 tweets on the 6th of October and 1465 tweets on the 15th of the same month.

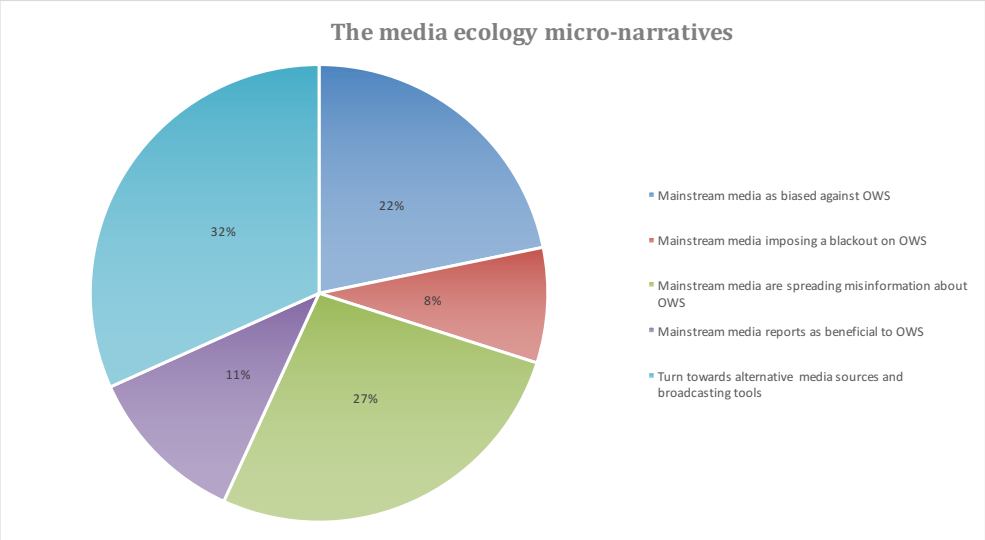

Figure 6: The allotment of the micro-narratives constructing the media ecology narrative of OWS on Twitter during two key events

As Figure 6 illustrates, the biggest percentage of the stories told (32%) referred to their turn towards alternative mainstream media and broadcasting tools. Such alternative media were either online newspapers, such as *Mother Jones,* or broadcasting tools such as livestreaming services, like ustream and livestream. 27% of the stories talked about how mainstream media spread misinformation about OWS, and 22% about how mainstream media was biased against the movement. In the meantime, there were a few positive responses to mainstream media reporting, with 11% of the stories talking about some reports as being beneficial and positive to the movement. The final 8% of the stories talked about how the mainstream media imposed a blackout on the movement. Even with the low numbers of this last micro-

narrative it is important to note its existence, because it will be important to compare it with the third key event I will talk about later as a separate event, due to its intensity: the eviction of the movement from Zuccotti Park.

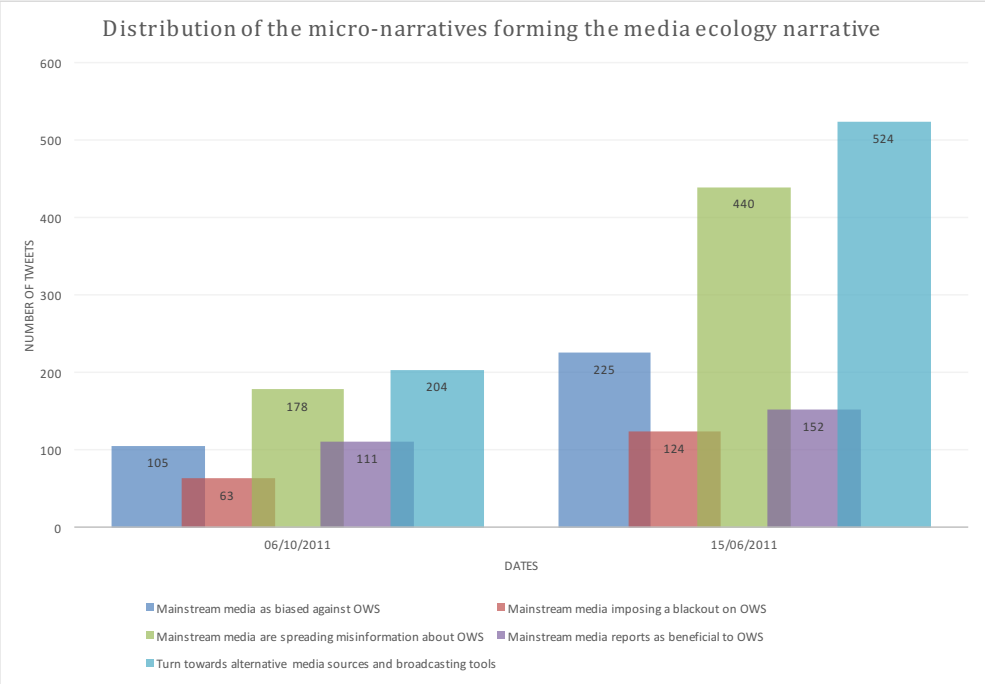

Figure 7: The micro-narratives forming the media ecology narrative of OWS on the 6th and 15th of October

As Figure 7 shows in more detail, both days were led by the same micro-narratives, with the stories talking about the turn towards alternative media and broadcasting tools dominating both days. Stories calling out mainstream media as agents that spread misinformation about the movement, gained much more strength on the 15th of the month, the day protests in support of OWS went worldwide. In contrast, stories talking positively about the ways in which mainstream media reported on the movement remained rather stable for both days, reaching an even higher level of activity during the 15th than the 6th. Users tended to criticise media, rather than side with them. The stories talking about mainstream media as biased against OWS, were steadily leading the narrative as the third most popular kind of story, while the reactions against the blackout of OWS from mainstream media were on a lower level at this point. However, as figure 7 shows, this began gaining

strength, since it doubled in activity on the 15th.

This analysis shows that people were much more concerned with mainstream media reporting on Steve Jobs than talking about the movement, with a lot of them mentioning the disproportionate airtime given to the death of Apple's CEO in comparison to the airtime given to OWS. The analysis of these tweets indicate again the two sides of the media ecology's coin: the importance of social movements in building more direct links with mainstream media and the standard stance of MSM to stand against social movements from their appearance. This also shows how the relationship of users on Twitter with mainstream media on Twitter was practically a one-way link, since there was no single reply from mainstream media to tweets mentioning them. Such tweets particularly referred to the biased position of MSN against OWS, encapsulated in slogans such as 'the revolution will not be televised' and pointing to the relationship of mainstream media with big Wall Street companies. Such tweets can be found in Table 2:

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
06/10/11	*01:07*	KVSwagger I guess it's come to fruition… 'the revolution will not be televised' because seeing that, you might start to think for yourself...#ows
06/10/11	*06:48*	NickBMorgan 6:45 and nothing on CNN about #OWS. All Steve, all morning. Touching bio-video about Steve Jobs. Much more pleasant than NYPD pepper spray.
06/10/11	*10:37*	penaetis .GreenGoddessVV oh I was disgusted that MSNBC was ignoring #ows 2 dedicate all coverage to Steve Jobs. I hear Apple tried to reboot him.
06/10/11	*15:47*	YearofHorror The media tries to ignore or shrug off #OWS because the media is largely Wall Street traders now. I'm looking at you, Jim Cramer.
06/10/11	*16:08*	LeftSlashRight Corporate media are wealthy, paid actors. High stock investments matter more than lives SioenRoux #ows #p2 #lsr #99ers #tcot #tlot #p21
06/10/11	*18:34*	ItheMissingLink TheYoungTurks moronwatch "Seriously" MT Moron CNN reporter #EpicFail ErinBurnett accused of bias 2ward #Occupywallstreet protesters #OWS
15/10/11	*00:53*	Obamacalypse As reporters elicit revealing comments from #OWS miscreants, you get a sense of the depth of their indoctrination & single mindedness. #ocra
15/10/11	*01:55*	OccupyMainSt A #MorePerfectUnion cannot be had while #media conglomerates like #NewsCorp can corrupt the political system. #OWS
15/10/11	*15:10*	MahalaBell MT MarkusPBell: #occupywallstreet Oreilly show is spot on abt media bias #OWS & havin someone as smart as GB on 2 explain it. Geraldo=Naive
15/10/11	*21:45*	EBagsLOLZ Why does #CNN have an #ows story right next to a story on domestic #terrorism??? #mediabias #mediafail
15/10/11	*23:17*	CineversityTV MaxGraham BPGulfLeak Do #U guys reallytrust these #corporate #MSM they'll publish anything that will make it #media #ows #globalrevolution
15/10/11	23:27	langdonw Sick bias in media treatment of global protests, esp. CBS/AP: "Occupy protests go global, turn violent." Only one in Rome, folks. #ows

Table 2: A sample of the tweets accusing MSN of bias

Additionally, as a sample of tweets in Table 3 below further shows, *CNN*,

MSNBC, and *Fox News* stand as the most accused mainstream media when talking about a blackout of OWS on the 6th. But in the 15th of October's data, *ABC*, *CBS* and *NBC* appear in the dataset, and all together are mentioned in 42% of the tweets that refer to a blackout and/or bias against OWS by mainstream media:

Date	Time	Tweet
06/10/11	01:47	popart84 nytimes this is OUR city, this is OUR country. Won't you get with the "times" and report on whats happening!? <3 WE THE PEOPLE! #OWS
06/10/11	07:13	MsChicaBonita Why aren't there more media covering the Wall Street protest? This is a really big deal and people seem to want to ignore! #OWS
06/10/11	08:15	My pledge to the #OWS peaceful protesters is that I will TURN OFF any media that fails to cover their daily activities MSNBC CNN ABC CBS
06/10/11	08:16	rrobts morgan_mcleod nuh ive been keeping my eye on abc & sbs and theres nothing #wheresthemedia #ows
06/10/11	16:42	patricklarkin Why virtually no coverage of #OWS on mainstream television media? There are Americans getting beaten in the streets.
06/10/11	20:37	LUCKYMW To All Mainstream Media---Keep covering the GOP race and '12, like they're still even relevant. Get your asses to the streets and cover #OWS
15/10/11	01:25	Tramz93 Dear CNNbrk CNN CNNPolitics , If you aren't giving massive coverage to worldwide #OWS #O15 protests today, you are no longer a news org
15/10/11	18:55	SamwiseHampson The #OWS goings on fascinate me a bit, and especially how little coverage the mainstream media are giving it all.
15/10/11	21:38	alexitoelbonito #OWS Occupy Wall Street is now occupying Times Square, do you think that would worth some live national tv coverage, que no? #Censorship?
15/10/11	23:30	UrquhartMP MSM can provide crystal clear TV coverage from anywhere. Except Times Square which is apparently located on Mercury. #CNN #OWS
15/10/11	23:58	MegRobertson No hint of protests on TV. On CNN: MLK special. MSNBC: Lockup Corcoran. NBC/ABC/CBS: movies and/or sports. NY1: Theater show. #ows

Table 3: A sample of tweets accusing MSN as imposing a 'blackout' on OWS' coverage

In the meantime, in tweets that accuse mainstream media of misinforming the public, mentions of *CNN* and *Fox News* outnumber any other channels' mentions. On the 6th of October, 28% of the total number of tweets referring to mainstream media mentions CNN and Fox News, while on the 15th of October that percentage rises up to 41%. On the 15th of October though, Twitter supporters were also worried about MSM misrepresenting them and associating them with the respective Occupy movement in Rome, where on that day, huge clashes with the police happened, as well as the violent destruction of property. In this respect, 8% of the tweets referring to the media misinforming the public were referring to the absurdity of labelling OWS with the same violent character as the Rome protests, while the rest accused MSM of misleading the public, and spinning OWS as they liked (Table 4):

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
06/10/11	*06:40*	OakFoSho It really is amazing, & horrifying, to listen to 3 different spins put on #OWS from CNN MSNBC & FoxNews. #JournalismIsDead #p21
06/10/11	*13:14*	jacremes Dear reporters: #OWS protests didn't "turn violent" last night. The police response to #OWS turned violent. The violence was one-sided.
06/10/11	*13:54*	Tao23Pretty disgusted w FoxNews commentator clips referring to #OWS as 'Nazis' & 'anti-American'. Hoping to stir up great-for-ratings violence?
06/10/11	*15:01*	cleolinda …Rapscallions? fox25news Shame on VB for calling #OWS protesters "gnats" ,"kooks","rapscallions" with no purpose & burden on taxpayers.
06/10/11	*15:27*	exxonBP Awful commentary on the #ows movement : "They have no demands" - Do mainstream pols have coherent, programs/demands? No, they do not.
06/10/11	*19:15*	CompaNilo looks like the media is trying to tie #OWS with a political party
15/10/11	*00:34*	JustLikeMikee These media outlets are trying to separate the people, Left/Right Up/Down screw them #unite and let the TRUTH be TOLD #OWS
15/10/11	*00:55*	lewagon News outlets hope that if they say that #ows has no message enough times it'll become true. Their strategy is minimize and marginalize. #BS
15/10/11	*02:32*	jazzcattrio According to foxnews, all of the #OWS protesters are filthy & have no message. Fox Propaganda Network. They don't report. They lie. #p2
15/10/11	*03:26*	C0d3fr0sty Dear Foxnews The only open sewer is your network! #ows #FoxNewLies /via C0d3Fr0sty #p2 #tcot
15/10/11	*11:42*	barkway ffweekend I've never heard so many lies & misinformation in my life. No wonder you're not seen as real news! #jennymartin #OWS
15/10/11	17:55	crypticvalentin isn't it interesting,# corporatemedia blacked out OWS for so long, but now giving extensive coverage to Rome violence?..#ows..#rome..

Table 4: A sample of tweets accusing MSM of misinforming the public

There were, however, a number of stories during these two days, that praised journalists' efforts to help OWS and report on it truthfully. A number of supporters also considered the relationship between the movement and mainstream media as an essential part of the movement's ecology. Indeed, they would keep pushing for and arguing about how the mainstream media were indeed covering the movement in a positive light. In relation to both key events, positive comments from Twitter supporters were low in numbers: 10% on the 6th of October and 4% on the 15th of October respectively, out of all the tweets about media and the OWS.

It becomes then apparent that as time went by, there was a loss in trust of mainstream media's coverage. The positive attitude was more obvious on the 6th of October, during the press conference during which Obama made reference to OWS, since 24% of the day's mainstream media tweets referred specifically to the mention of OWS by Obama. Indeed, Obama's response was the result of a friendly-to-OWS reporter asking about OWS. This momentarily gave a positive vibe to the media ecology of the movement and changed the conversation from the negative connotations of mainstream

media to a more positive view of them. This occurred simply because they broadcasted a mention of OWS from Obama. However, this positive sentiment arguably did not last long after the 6th, and even though there were a significant number of positive tweets for mainstream media coverage on the 15th, they were not very decisive or hopeful, as Table 5 below shows:

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
06/10/11	*7:35*	flemingjude BBCWorld Thanks for reporting on #ows. Similar angst among Brits, youth, disenchantment with inverted-Totalitarianism.
06/10/11	*9:01*	Rdusenbery #OccupyWallStreet and OccupyPhilly get the lead story on CBS3 KYW TV. Woot! #ows
06/10/11	*11:51*	CNN shows video of #NYPDBrutality from last night while talking about arrests... It's a start #occupywallstreet #OWS #solidarity
06/10/11	*11:22*	CMarPA Yeah! One of the press asked POTUS about #ows
06/10/11	*11:22*	srubenfeld Obama takes a question about #OWS at today's presser. Answering now.
06/10/11	*11:22*	Obama: “It expresses the frustration that the American people feel” #POTUS #OWS
06/10/11	*11:24*	GetUpStandUp420 Obama on #OccupyWallStreet: “I think it expresses the frustrations that the American people feel.” #ows
06/10/11	*23:42*	Andrew8754 TheChaseNight of any i've seen, the colbert report was half decent #ows
15/10/11	*15:47*	OccupyWestchstr #Occupy is getting front page #news now thank you fellow #occupiers! #ows #99Percent #solidarity
15/10/11	*16:04*	OlympedeGouges Thank you, CNN. For once you got it right. #OWS is peaceful, vandals are using the protests to vandalize.
15/10/11	*21:45*	CarrieM213 I’m right under the ABC news ticker & the crowd cheers every time the headline “Occupy Wall Street Movement Goes Worldwide” goes past. #ows
15/10/11	22:45	peterrpthberg WNBC reporting 10,000-20,000 in Times Sq at #OWS #OccupyWallStreet
15/10/11	23:04	rockportbasset FINALLY! CNN does a short piece on #OWS in NYC
15/10/11	23:14	CineversityTV BPGulfLeak Looks like mainstream media (not incl Fox) sees #ows as positive, peaceful, understandable, acceptable.

Table 5: A sample of tweets mentioning Obama’s recognition of OWS

These positive mentions progressed the positive sentiment for MSM, when they took the form of compliments to journalists who covered OWS. I will talk about these briefly in the following section. Indeed, in contrast to the 11% of positive tweets about mainstream media and mainstream media journalists, tweets about turning towards alternative media, citizen radios, and other broadcasting tools, such as livestreams, covered 32% of the stories told on these two days:

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
06/10/11	*09:11*	OccupationTelevision Sentiment Distilled From GlobalRevolution.TV SMASH Global Network #OWS Audience 2 Fortune 100 Brands: “Hypocrisy Need NOT Apply.” #Quagmire
06/10/11	*11:39*	osiris322 Watching now DemocracyNow on Dish Network LinkTV, great coverage of #OWS, not bothering w/ Obama also speakg.
06/10/11	*12:55*	Quinisha The only ppl giving #ows the time of day are KeithOlbermann & UncleRUSH ...the rest of you media wankers are what ?! #late
06/10/11	*15:04*	eadvocate I am one that would have to be surmounted if anyone harms the integrity of Sabzbrach. Her #ows journalism is superb. Bravo kennethlipp
06/10/11	*17:03*	OccupyLB the only media that will care is local media and media outside the US RT_com AJEnglish KeithOlbermann #localnews #ows
06/10/11	*18:10*	Cryn_Johannsen Follow OccupyTV! #ows #usdor
06/10/11	*17:19*	CharlesBivona Am I only one who just leaves the #OWS livestream running all time? If I am, you are all missing something awe inspiring.
15/10/11	*01:15*	TheLindsayMead Our greatest protection is our cameras. When an injustice is being done by someone in power, hit record, and show it to the world. #OWS
15/10/11	*03:39*	Wochenzeitung For our coverage of #15Oct #OWS #occupyparadeplatz we are looking for pictures of tents and camping material. Please RT. #WOZfoto #15O
15/10/11	*05:12*	MenifeeTheater #OWS citizen journalist OpWallStreet OccupyAmplify TorianBrown SabzBrach BlogDiva Lockean DustinSlaughter Asher_Wolf
15/10/11	*09:36*	MonicaCrowley Don't miss my radio show today! I'm going to deal w/ #OWS in ways you have not yet heard. The truth of what's going on will blow you away.
15/10/11	11:44	Lumen_Kobera #live15O trending high, the who world is watching, we are winning.#ows #oct15
15/10/11	17:50	southernlib Bless #livestream for #ows coverage. Times Square crowd chanting “Hey hey, ho ho, corporate greed has go to go!”
15/10/11	18:30	carinalouiseren 2920 ppl watching on livestream. #ows #timessquare #15O and counting!

Table 6: A sample of tweets showing OWS’ supporters inclination towards alternative media

Activists and supporters usually expressed feelings that favoured non-representative individuals as the main actors of the movement. For instance, mainstream media would focus on people who acted strange or who were acting illegally—for example, the individual who defecated on a police car—in order to advance their already formed narratives. Twitter activists and supporters framed OWS as a radical form of civil disobedience for equality, which did not aim to incite or support violence, by erecting a free OWS Library. In this way, they showed how they were striving for better education and the creation of a community around the occupation. In the meantime, mainstream media presented them as potentially violent and insignificant, branding them with labels they did not identify with. The use of Twitter, as an alternative medium to mainstream media, acted as a means of criticising mainstream media’s coverage and specific journalists. This served as a collective social tool, adopted by the movement. However, these efforts to manage the news-making process were indeed hard to control, and for some, the only way to get their deserved space in the news was to approach

journalists themselves.

At the other end of the spectrum then, Twitter provided a channel for engaging with journalists who were much more actively engaging with Twitter users. In this way Twitter afforded a more 'linear' relationship between activists, supporters, and alternative journalists than the traditional face-to-face relationship, which often took the form of interviews. Indeed, these had a hierarchical structure, with the journalist being in charge. Substantially, most of these tweets were just grasping the realisation that only independent journalists and smaller alternative media (e.g. online newspapers and independent channels) were 'on their side'.

Initially, OWS' Twitter supporters expressed a preference for Keith Olbermann, who was one of the first journalists to spend time at Zuccotti Park, and who reported on it 'objectively' and extensively. More precisely, 21% of the tweets, which complimented journalists' coverage and applauded smaller media's coverage on the 6th of October, mentioned Keith Olbermann and his TV channel, *Current*, while another 14% of the tweets of the day were spent on thanking mass-twitterers as citizen-journalists, and other alternative media for reporting on OWS positively. By the 15th of October other journalists had already come to the surface to support OWS. Among these was the filmmaker Michael Moore and reporter Josh Harkinson, writing on motherjones.com. Table 7 below shows a sample of the 4% of the tweets that complimented Moore and the 6% of the tweets that complimented Harkinson, on and the site that employed him:

Date	Time	Tweet
06/10/11	00:10	W26Michelle MMFlint inspiring video of yours I just watched. I'd like to get a sponsor to help me get to #ows the whole movement is amazing
06/10/11	01:15	dellalee Follow mgouldwartofsky from NYC for on the spot coverage of #OWS
06/10/11	07:52	PopeJenkinsIV My man crush on KeithOlbermann has only amplified thanks to his #OWS protest coverage.
06/10/11	08:17	alxswlkr fuck the #OWS interviews from today's CitizenRadio are inspiring.
06/10/11	12:55	Quinisha The only ppl giving #ows the time of day are KeithOlbermann & UncleRUSH ...the rest of you media wankers are what ?! #late
06/10/11	13:08	baysocialist NaomiAKlein did a great job on DemocracyNow this morning taking down the corporate media's ritual mocking of protesters. #OWS
15/10/11	00:54	shakidog MMFlint Thank goodness for journalists like Lawrence and KeithOlbermann for their coverage of #OWS.
15/10/11	01:06	FuentesR So true! MotherJones deserves it for reporting the hell out of ALL THE THINGS, especially regarding the #OWS movement. #FF RTradiancelis
15/10/11	01:23	ellenstrickland JoshHarkinson Fascinating, hearing the inside processes of #ows It's fantastic, having someone reporting like you are. Thank you Josh.

Table 7: A sample of tweets that reflected positively on OWS journalists

These smaller media and individual journalists were clearly considered as friendly actors, since they provided a certain volume of positive and accurate media coverage of the movement. This enhanced the image of OWS and attracted more people down to Zuccotti Park, with 19% of all the tweets referring to the media and OWS during these two key events, indicated to them. Big corporate mainstream media were believed to bolster a presumed context that foretold a story of violence, while journalists such as Olbermann helped activists to promote their message and form other spheres of discussion that were more aligned with the OWS' activists' motives. By offering visibility to the movement, this handful of journalists established an essential avenue of communication for activists and other OWS actors in the media ecology, representing them as valid political actors who engaged in the development of public discourses about certain public and popular issues (Ferree et al., 2002).

To bring the second part of this chapter together, I assert that the micro-narratives building the media ecology of OWS illustrated how OWS' supporters portrayed the media ecology narrative surrounding the movement as a mixture of mainstream media organisations and social media. The former was predominantly negative in nature, while the latter supported the movement's values. Twitter supporters cited national daily newspapers as

mostly against the movement, and as biased actors who misinformed the public regarding the movement. This reinforces my interviewees' views on mainstream media, as I discussed in the first part of this chapter. They also deemed alternative mainstream media and specific journalists as important actors in their media ecology. These alternative journalists were media actors who provided a habitual relationship with OWS. The media ecology narrative formed on Twitter on the 6th and the 15th of October hence, gravitated against specific media and towards alternative channels of communication. This narrative moved away from big channels and towards websites, smaller newspapers and independent channels.

5.3 Ephemeral social media narratives: the eviction of OWS

> The space of appearance [that] comes into being wherever men [and women] are together in the manner of speech and action, and therefore predates and precedes all formal constitution of the public realm […] it does not survive the actuality of the movement which brought it into being, but disappears not only with the dispersal of men […] but with the disappearance or arrest of the activities themselves.
>
> Hannah Arendt, 1998:199

> No right is absolute and with every right comes responsibilities. The First Amendment gives every New Yorker the right to speak out – but it does not give anyone the right to sleep in a park or otherwise take it over to the exclusion of others – nor does it permit anyone in our society to live outside the law. There is no ambiguity in the law here – the First Amendment protects speech – it does not protect the use of tents and sleeping bags to take over a public space. Protestors have had two months to occupy the park with tents and sleeping bags. Now they will have to occupy the space with the power of their arguments.'[40]
>
> Statement of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg on Clearing and Re-opening of Zuccotti Park

[40] News from the Blue Room, For Immediate Release, PR-410-11, November 15, 2011, "Statement of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg on Clearing and Re-opening of Zuccotti Park" http://www.nyc.gov/portal/site/nycgov/menuitem.c0935b9a57bb4ef3daf2f1c701c789a0/index.jsp?pageID=mayor_press_release&catID=1194&doc_name=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nyc.gov%2Fhtml%2Fom%2Fhtml%2F2011b%2Fpr410-11.html&cc=unused1978&rc=1194&ndi=1

In the previous sections I discussed how Obama's mention of OWS on the 6th of October incited the 15th of October worldwide protests in support of OWS, and caused spikes in micro-narratives about mainstream media bias and alternative media support. A month later, on the night of the 15th of November, the movement was rampantly shattered by the NYPD and all protesters were evicted from Zuccotti Park by the morning of the following day. With riot police assaulting both protesters and journalists, amidst night sky buzzing with police helicopters, OWS was evicted and banned from ever returning to Zuccotti Park. This rampant police brutality, involving attempts to conceal the eviction from the eyes of the mainstream media and the public alike, had a paradoxical effect. As I will now discuss, it augmented supportive reactions on Twitter, which reinforced OWS' statements about the corrupted mainstream media, and the economic and political structures of the US.

Twitter's role during the eviction evokes Hannah Arendt's 'space of appearance', which I mentioned in the introduction to this section. This is precisely because it was one of the key social media used to report outrage about the mainstream media blackout of the eviction event (1998:199). Mayor Bloomberg had mobilised the New York Police Department (NYPD), viewing it, as some interviewees put it, as his personal military force. He commanded them to throw protesters out of Zuccotti Park in the middle of the night, while prohibiting journalists and cameras from recording NYPD's tactics. However, by allowing OWS' supporters to broadcast what they were watching through livestreams on Twitter, Twitter worked as the space for people to criticise Bloomberg, to show support, react against the violent character of the police, and to find ways to circumvent misinformation about events at the camp. Bloomberg later released a statement (opening quote in this section), declaring that the First Amendment 'does not protect the use of tents and sleeping bags' and suggested that now protesters had to 'occupy the space with the power of their arguments'.

From an activist's point of view, a lot can be said about the language and the tone of Mayor Bloomberg's statement. First, it underlines how the refusal of OWS to abide by hierarchical organisational structures and to nominate a list of demands, was used at times, as a point to de-legitimise OWS. As I have discussed in the first part of this chapter, mainstream media used this 'no demands' strategy to create and sustain a negative narrative around OWS. Second, it worked as evidence of the political controversy between New York City's officials and the movement. The statement makes clear, to some degree, that the eviction was not based exclusively on worries related to the park's cleanliness, but was instead the end of the Mayor's willingness to endure the movement. This was again a double sword for the movement. On the one hand, OWS lost the physical space that was driving, inspiring, and sustaining the movement, but on the other hand, it also provided OWS with a justification for actually disrupting the *status quo*. As John, 27, argued during our interview:

> They threw us out like we were nothing and wouldn't let the media's helicopters stream the eviction. I mean, come on! By just that you get how they knew that what they were doing was wrong. But at that minute we also *knew* that we managed to make a change. We managed *to make them notice us*, and that on its own was a success.

In this framework, I argue that the end of OWS' story on the ground, resembles what Arendt called 'natality', the birth of a new political scene in which 'men [and women] are equipped for the logically paradoxical task of making a new beginning because they themselves are new beginnings and hence beginners.' This 'beginner' capacity is rooted in natality and it becomes 'the world by virtue of birth' (Arendt 1963: 203). By evicting the movement from Zuccotti Park and prohibiting the mainstream media from reporting on the eviction — as I will discuss in this third part of the chapter —Mayor Bloomberg inadvertently gave a new beginning to the movement, which

would later cultivate other activist groups (e.g. Occupy Sandy). However, this was also the beginning of a political consciousness, since OWS' supporters now knew that they had 'started a revolution,' as Joanna, 31, suggested.

This 'natality' moment of OWS happened at the climax of its story: at a moment when more Twitter users realised what OWS meant and stood for (or against). At this time, a much larger volume of users than previously began taking part in OWS' Twitter story. This was also a case of witnessing a key event happening on a Twitter timeline, and a case of supporting the movement. The eviction spiked the support and consolidated the 'natality' element of OWS' climax moment. In this framework and from this point onwards, I will focus on the eviction day, in order to analyse the proposed media ecology narrative, the ways in which users on Twitter reacted to the eviction, and the kinds of stories they shared in response to the violent eviction. I will also bring together the themes of the previous two parts of this chapter: the hostile role of mainstream media and the turn of OWS towards more independent or alternative media: journalists, smaller new websites, and livestreams. Additionally, this analysis will stand as a precursor to the following two chapters on violence narratives, the Twitter abuse narrative and the narrative against police violence.

As will be discussed, the dominant micro-narratives on Twitter during the eviction leaned towards the wrongful ban of the press from Zuccotti Park, the 'blackout' of the eviction from the mainstream media, and the role of NYPD in tearing the occupation apart. It is yet impossible for a study such as this to know exactly how limited or untrustworthy any specific mainstream media or individuals were, let alone what impact their reporting practices (or lack thereof) had on the eviction or the movement as a whole. It is also equally impossible to prove that the NYPD used excessive force against the protesters on the 15th of November. Interesting and revealing as these claims are, these sections do not attempt to answer these uncertainties. Instead, this analysis sheds light on the dynamics of the stories told through the micro-narratives

on Twitter, and the ways in which those micro-narratives shaped the discussions about the movement's media ecology on its last day on-the-ground.

5.3.1 The Beginning of the End: Unfolding OWS' eviction

The OWS evacuation took place at remarkably short notice and was based on a great level of coordinated action by the New York Police Department. The evacuation plan was so well performed that OWS supporters only realised that the evacuation would take place just before midnight. Likewise, journalists did not get the chance to prepare or head to the park on time. The first tweet suggesting that the police was going to try to evict protesters from Zuccotti Park was tweeted at 11:38pm on the 14th of November by Ahmir Khalib Thompson, a musician/journalist, who under the handle @questlove tweeted:

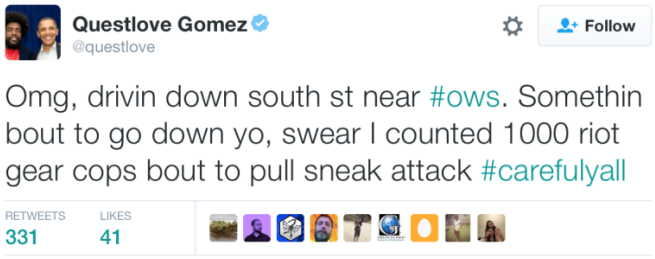

Figure 8: The first tweet reporting the possibility of the eviction and the masses of police arriving at Zuccotti Park.

From then on, the story that OWS would be evicted begun to unfold, with several users referring to @questlove as the independent journalist who managed to scoop the breaking news regarding the eviction earlier than the mainstream media, and thanking him for it (Table 8):

Date	Time	Tweet
15/11/11	*00:36*	OccupyWallStNYC Hearing reports of large police presence near #LibertySquare/#LibertyPlaza from questlove. Anybody confirm? cc: mcduh #ows
15/11/11	*00:43*	JAMyerson I'm hearing that questlove's tweet isn't the only worrying report. People are on eviction-watch. #ows
15/11/11	*01:09*	BestBBEver Questlove OccupyWallStNYC your first email is how i warned my friends THANK YOU! of course NYC does it by cover of #darkness #OWS #cowards
15/11/11	*01:11*	CaffeinatedOwl CNN you might wanna hire questlove! Careful out there #NYC #OWS
15/11/11	*01:12*	howlinforfallon So questlove's got me watching the #ows raid. Crazy stuff!
15/11/11	*01:12*	eskaar Dang, best listen to questlove next time as he broke the #OWS raid news like 2 hours ago. #YOALLCAPSARENOTSWEETNOMATTERTHESITUATION
15/11/11	*01:24*	JUJY #ows getting raided. questlove is always my best source of news!
15/11/11	*01:25*	KidATiki questlove Manhattan - *Zuccotti Park* #NYPD Units have staged and will be ejecting protesters from the park #OCCUPYWALLSTREET #OWS
15/11/11	*01:33*	mjsutherlin questlove breaks the news of the #OWS raid on twitter before the nytimes & a lot of other news outlets. Give that man a press pass.
15/11/11	02:01	HKlo116 Sorry NBCNews ...but questlove already broke the story on police making #OWS protesters vacate. Talented musician AND reporter
15/11/11	02:02	skyle Amazing how questlove broke the news. #ows
15/11/11	02:10	KrissyBalls questlove I am going to credit you with breaking the news about #OWS. Cool?
15/11/11	02:17	MissSuccess I think questlove might have been the 1st person to report that something was going to happen. He saw riot cops near his house ard 11p #OWS
15/11/11	02:29	dcmullins questlove is to the media as Jay-Z is to lawyers. Beat the Associated Press by at least 2 hrs. #ows

Table 8: A sample of tweets recognising Khalib Thompson as the source of the breaking news regarding the eviction of OWS

This was the first occasion during the eviction day in which a user became, either willingly or unwillingly, a leading character in the narratives of the movement, even if this only lasted for a few hours. This user behaviour makes obvious one of the apparent symptoms of the shift of social movements towards the use of social media platforms. Platforms such as Twitter offer, and are used as, spaces that accommodate an incessant conversation among the protesters and their supporters. This is an intense, constant, inward-directed conversation, where they come to talk and think about their movement/protest as if it was in the centre of the platform's subsistence. This usually results in the creation, or in the unveiling of such 'leading characters': the users who first report on a situation and/or are the creators of a completely new micro-narrative. Such a micro-fame is part of a larger move towards micro-narratives—towards more narratives, and more short-lived ephemeral narratives—that define social movements' storytelling on Twitter. These 'leading characters' report extensively on the event-taking place first, or are identified as the influential figures in the story. The main explanation for this shift can be possibly attributed to the instantaneity of

Twitter, to its ability to accommodate 'fast' stories in the form of breaking news (Papacharissi, 2015). This is where the role of the mainstream media becomes perplexing and blurred, since instead of having the press breaking the news and owning the story and its directionality, we find individuals with no journalistic experience breaking them and letting them develop on social media platforms such as Twitter.

More precisely, @questlove's breaking news moment became the moment in which the media ecology narrative of the eviction began to unravel. His tweet worked as the harbinger of what would become a bigger issue in the narrative of OWS' eviction: mainstream media *not* reporting on the eviction, while at the same time being blocked by the police for security reasons. Indeed, the lack of warning for the evacuation, and the abrupt steps police took to evict the protesters, demonstrated a genuine attempt to silence the event.[41] In this context, and as Mayor Bloomberg reported later in the morning during his press conference, NYC authorities prevented journalists from witnessing the eviction of Zuccotti Park in order to 'protect the members of the press' and 'to provide protection and we have done exactly that.'[42] Twitter users, however, began early on to accuse the police of obstructing the practice of the first amendment[43], when the pointed out the illegality of preventing the press from reporting on the eviction.[44] An example of this general sentiment against police's attitudes towards the press was the most retweeted tweet of the night. It was tweeted at 2:14am, by George Zornick, who sarcastically criticised NYC authorities (Figure 9).

[41] Protesters did not get a warning to evacuate the camp until they were already surrounded by NYPD at around 1:00am.
[42] Access Bloomberg's conference speech here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DuU0yKHqCNs> = on the 13:10 minute
[43] The First Amendment to the United States Constitution focuses on respecting the establishment of a religion, impeding the free exercise of religion, abridging the freedom of speech, infringing on the freedom of the press, interfering with the right to peaceably assemble, or prohibiting the petitioning for a governmental redress of grievances.
[44] I will discuss this police violence element of the eviction in Chapter 7, while here I will focus on the media's role during the eviction

Figure 9: The most retweeted tweet during the night of the eviction

Other journalists reported that the NYPD took reporters' badges away and threatened or arrested them. In one instance, Ryan Devereaux, a journalist, tweeted:

Date	Time	Tweet
15/11/11	02:32	rdevro The NYPD just threatened to take our press passes if we don't move off the block. They are forcing us to move where we can't see shit. #OWS

Table 9: Ryan Devereaux tweet, regarding NYPD threatening to take journalists' passes during the eviction

Reporters and protesters on the ground kept reporting how the press was shut out from the park, whilst the outrage was augmented by NYPD's demand for clearing the park's airspace, thus not allowing media's helicopters to report live with video from above. As Adrian Parsons tweeted:

Date	Time	Tweet
15/11/11	*01:59*	adrian_parsons: Allowing no press, clearing the #CBS helicopter's airspace, no pedestrians within 4 blocks & no subway access. What country is this? #ows.

Table 10: Adrian Parsons tweet, regarding NYPD not allowing press in during the eviction

The result, from many OWS supporters' points of view, was an event supported by social media instead of the mainstream media. As @mmmelissa01 tweeted:

Date	Time	Tweet
15/11/11	*02:48*	mmmelissa01 This is why I love twitter. Real events. Real people. Real time. Unedited. Discern for yourself. #NYPD. #OWS. Where's Anderson?

Table 11: @mmmelissa01 tweet, regarding the shift to Twitter as a broadcasting tool during the eviction

As is evident from her tweet and her call on Anderson Cooper, a journalist at CNN, there was still a demand for mainstream media to cover the eviction. This call to mainstream media to cover the movement formed one of the biggest micro-narratives constructing the OWS' eviction story too, and acts as a counterpart to the first part of this chapter, in which interviewees stressed the importance of media coverage. This was the narrative that a percentage of tweets added to and expanded on for the whole day, and it was driven predominantly by the belief that NYPD and NY authorities unlawfully and immorally banned journalists from the park, and hence from reporting on the eviction.

5.3.2 The Leading Characters of the Media-Blackout narrative

Some professional journalists played an important role, in unexpected ways, during the eviction. More specifically, Josh Harkinson, a journalist from *Mother Jones*, and Keith Olberman who at the time presented 'Countdown with Keith Olbermann', an hour-long weeknight news and political commentary programme on Current TV, became the leading character journalists of the eviction. Among others, these two journalists were openly supporting OWS and visiting Zuccotti Park regularly. As Twitter reactions to Josh Harkinson's live-tweeting of the eviction below show (Table 12), OWS' supporters and activists still considered credentialed journalists an important element of the protest, since they publicised the eviction. This is similar to what we have seen on the 6th and the 15th of October earlier:

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
15/11/11	*03:04*	harryelephante Follow JoshHarkinson for #OWS updates. He is one of the only reporters left in #ZuccottiPark. #OccupyWallStreet #OccupyWallSt #LibertySq
15/11/11	03:07	spedwybabs #ff follow joshharkinson for on the scene reporting from a reporter IN the park #ows
15/11/11	03:12	ericmjohnson Follow JoshHarkinson for live tweets at #OWS Liberty Plaza. One of only reporters inside after he evaded police blockade. Even NYT banned.
15/11/11	03:40	MetaGrrrl Excellent reporting from JoshHarkinson #OWS (Thanks, Josh!)
15/11/11	03:59	jpwalsh1 Check out JoshHarkinson's timeline, reporting from #ows during the raid.
15/11/11	04:59	InfamyInfamy Astounding eyewitness report of NY police evicting #OWS using teargas, beatings etc, from JoshHarkinson - vivid, filmic, very frightening
15/11/11	07:57	JaimeAlexis JoshHarkinson great job covering #ows btw!
15/11/11	08:56	punkcurmudgeon you should #follow JoshHarkinson for some great #OWS coverage. He even moved there to cover it full time. On the ground and realiable.

Table 12: A sample of tweets supporting Josh Harkinson's coverage of OWS

Josh Harkinson's tweet was discussed widely in the OP tweets of the movement, but his popularity sky-rocketed on the 15th of November. As we can see from the figure below, mentions to Josh Harkinson during the last forty days of the movement's on-the-ground presence rose during the 14th to the 17th of October, and abruptly again on the 15th of November during the eviction. The amount of mentions he received during the eviction illustrates two significant motifs when it comes to this storytelling discussion. First, he instantly became one of the leading characters of the eviction because he was present at the park, had already gained the support and trust of the protesters from previous events and because he was not considered as part of the elitist mainstream media. Second, his fame was distinctly ephemeral. Since mentions of him fell abruptly on the next day of the 15th of November. These two points are important to keep in mind when talking about the leaders or the leading characters of this movement, since the social media environment did choose to trust single personalities just because they seemed like leaders or because they were knowledgeable. Rather, they followed events as they unravelled and individuals as they surfaced from within those events.

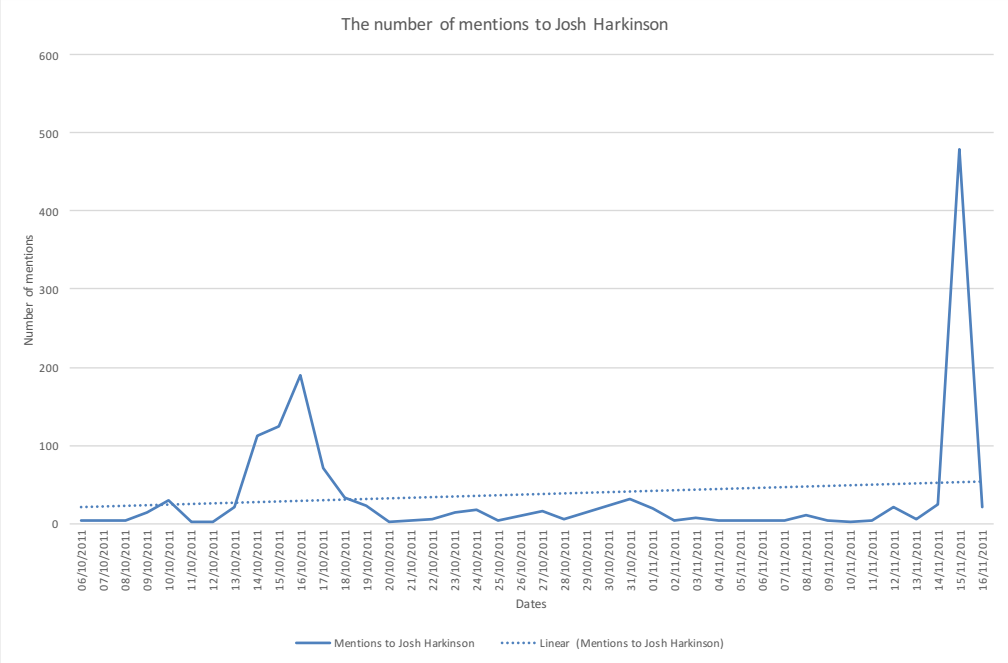

Figure 10: The distribution of mentions to Josh Harkinson during the last forty days of the movement

These reactions regarding the position of journalists supporting OWS, demonstrate how the boundaries between the traditional media response and the action became blurred, at least during the eviction. On the one hand, Harkinson witnessed the eviction from close-up, and shared his account of the event. On the other hand, professional journalists, such as Keith Olbermann, provided coverage of the movement, acting as correspondents on TV and on their own programmes. Supporters of OWS on social media and on-the-ground activists tended to think about journalists such as Olbermann as people directly related to their struggles, rather than as simply journalists. These relationships of trust, for both Harkinson and Olbermann, rested on the belief that these journalists were the only ones covering the 'real' movement and were not representing the mainstream media attitude of 'ignoring' the movement:

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
15/11/11	*02:06*	HandsomeTimmyD KeithOlbermann If anyone can help, sir, it's you - PLEASE report on the actual actions of the #NYPD #OWS needs your voice.
15/11/11	02:44	cheetapizza #NYPD is rioting against #OWS #OccupyWallStreet #rightnow. KeithOlbermann has been RT'ing first-hand reports. tedalexandro
15/11/11	03:44	CNell_NZ KeithOlbermann Thanks for covering #OWS. I've said that to you so often, but what the heck, have one more.
15/11/11	02:40	AureliaCotta .KeithOlbermann AntDeRosa I think it's time for #occupynewsrooms to kick into high gear. #ows #occupywallstreet

Table 13: A sample of tweets praising Olberman

In contrast to Harkinson's popularity, Keith Olberman's fame during the last forty days of the movement was more consistent. Even though tweets mentioning him rose sharply on the 15th and 16th of November, he never reached the high numbers of Harkinson, who had been present at the eviction site. This gives an additional extension to the leading characters of the eviction, since being present, witnessing, and living the experience while tweeting it, gave them more validity on social media than the supporters on Twitter. Thus, even though there was a rise in mentions of him during the eviction day, Olberman's popularity as a leading character decreased over time, because of his absence on the ground, and because he was not present during the eviction, as Harkinson was.

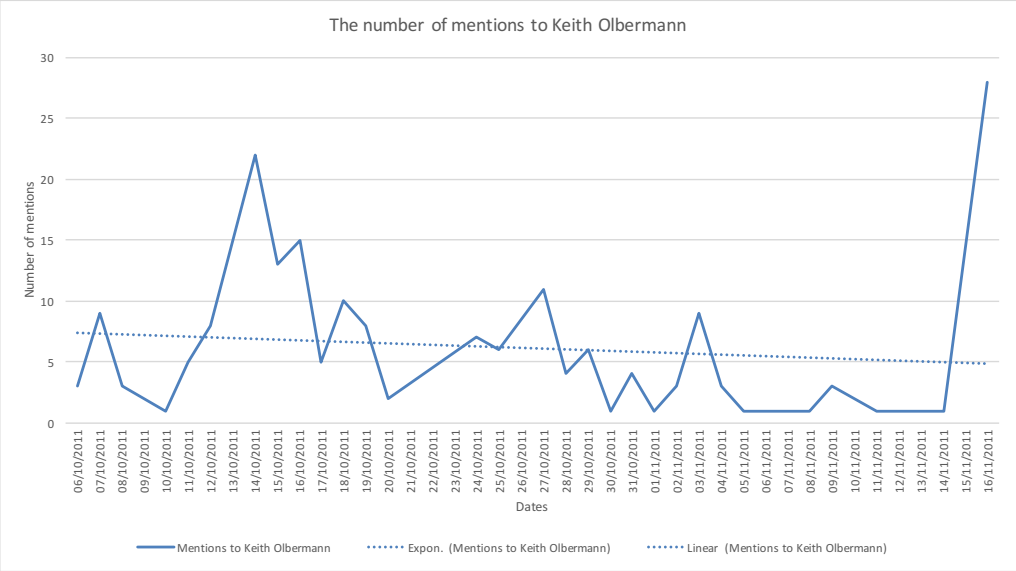

Figure 11: The distribution of mentions to Keith Olberman during the last forty days of the movement

Journalists' leading characters, in this instance, illustrate how the social ties between journalists and audiences became blurred and how the role of journalists became less typical on Twitter, as a space where activists, OWS supporters, and journalists trusted each other, in their joint effort to expose how the eviction was developing. The nature of the OWS storyline, and the creation of an environment of reliance, did not always assure the formation of a completely consenting interaction between the supporters, the activists and the journalists. However, it was occasionally synergistic, as Table 14 below illustrates:

Date	***Time***	***Tweet***
15/11/11	*03:21*	SunshineKruczek KeithOlbermann You need to follow JoshHarkinson from Mother Jones who just dashed his way inside the #OWS kitchen to report!
15/11/11	08:02	neilglassman After following JoshHarkinson & KeithOlbermann tweet on #OWS in early hours, I no longer doubt Twitter as a platform for journalis.
15/11/11	16:08	aejarch Will be watching KeithOlbermann tonight for reaction to #ows eviction from reporter JoshHarkinson and NewYorkCreator. Tune in.
15/11/11	20:15	SwirlPR Great interview on KeithOlbermann now with joshharkinson and Ryan Hoffman on #ows raid

Table 14: A sample of tweets showing the synergistic interaction between the leading characters of the eviction

The stories told illustrate a very interesting moment: the contested wall that separated OWS and the mainstream media broke down during a key event.

Twitter users were able to contact journalists directly, who were instantly responsive on the same space. Twitter here proved to be, to a certain degree, the storytelling machine through which the interactions between activists, social media supporters, and journalists unravelled the power strings between alternative and activist media, which enabled them to experience an event, and a media ecology. While OWS had not reach consensus regarding a mainstream-media relations plan, its members used Twitter to reconfirm and reinforce the story of the movement, and to, in some way or another, balance out the dominant deceptive representation of the movement that was in motion in other mainstream media outlets. Olbermann's and Harkinson's leading characters worked as the anti-heroes of the mainstream media, representing a section of the media that could be trusted, or even that could identify with the protesters and the movement itself.

The ephemeral character of these leading characters was stressed through what Justin in his interview described as 'interaction':

> It was less about creating celebrity or any kind of, you know, leadership figures, but it was more about interaction, communication and sharing ideas and strategies and tactics. That was an exciting time.
>
> Justin, 35, educator

From the inception of the movement, activists had stressed its leaderlessness and 'no demands' frame. That also created a number of vulnerabilities, which the movement faced in working with mainstream media as I discussed in the first part of this chapter. Using Twitter to tell stories that described their feelings against a media blackout during crucial events, supporters turned to Twitter, alternative journalists and their broadcasting avenues. Commenting on the eviction's media blackout added to the narrative of 'wrongdoings,' which OWS was seen to stand for, and empowered even more the claims they were making since the beginning of the movement. This was rooted in

the movement's general claim that they were not the ones causing issues in Wall Street, but they were instead unwanted by the police and the authorities, because they were raising valid points. The public intervention of the police, the media blackout, and the ultimate eviction of the movement, made the movement's stories more concrete and urgent. But what made this movement even more unique in their broadcasting nature was their reliance on livestreaming. In these final sections, I will look into how livestreaming altered and enhanced the eviction narratives, giving the sense that a movement that was being reborn and offering it a sense of catharsis.

5.4 Livestreaming Commentary as a Political Reality Show

Livestreaming was a popular practice for the Occupy movements in 2011. It was also a central tool for offering instant news, happenings, and witness accounts on events. Thus, it demonstrated not only the technical and social media proficiency of OWS, but also the problematic relationship between OWS and mainstream media. Livestreaming also became prevalent during OWS' eviction. Priscilla, one of the people in charge of the occupywallst.org website, proclaimed that by connecting with livestreamers in the US, they could see 'political action happening live in front of them'.

> *Priscilla*: Well people could not get to the protests if they weren't online.
> *Me*: They couldn't?
> *Priscilla*: We actually did a research, which showed that people were not political before they came to occupywallst.org; their circle of engagement started by coming in the website, connecting with the livestreamers; watching livestreamers and online live action, and spread it on Twitter. I mean, for a lot of people in the US this was the first time in their lives they actually saw political action happening live in front of them. Yeah, I think for a lot of people it was their first time they took part in something political.

There are two things to be picked up from this part of Pricilla's account. First,

she sees livestreaming as a method of changing the ways in which people engaged with social movement's instant action: they could watch what was happening on the ground while it was happening, and comment on it live on Twitter. Second, she talks about livestreaming as 'action happening live in front of them.' Action was admittedly not happening directly in front of their eyes, but through the screens of their laptops and phones; but she claimed that 'people could not get to the protests if they weren't online,' thus suggesting that being online made you part of the protest.

This section will first discuss how livestreaming the eviction event pulled people on Twitter together in support of OWS, creating in the meantime other leading characters. It will then discuss the paradoxical reality of livestreaming as 'a protest reality commentary pit' on Twitter. Here, the online becomes both the phone, as the on-the-ground medium of livestreaming, and the online medium of the livestreaming. The online and the on-the-ground blend in a single entity, making what happens on the ground directly related to what happens online.

Broadcasting live images from the park and the eviction not only gave people, who were not present, the opportunity to witness 'political action' live, but it also gave rise to the notion of the livestreamer as a leading character on platforms such as Twitter, where distant supporters craved information. Offering hours of raw candid footage of the eviction, Twitter bestowed on livestreamers the characteristics of the protagonists in the eviction story. Some of the livestreamers had no professional experience before getting into livestreaming for OWS, but just because they did livestreaming during the Zuccotti Park encampment, their popularity and reputation appointed them as trustworthy actors on Twitter. The purpose of these individuals became immediately urgent because of the need to attract more mainstream media attention, more online attention, and crucially, to communicate what was happening on the ground to the rest of the world. Twitter became people's to-go platform for finding information and spreading it for others to see.

Livestreaming of the eviction on Twitter proved important for OWS, as the evidence below shows. It functioned as a pacifier to calm supporters down because of the lack of information they were getting from mainstream media. Aware of livestreaming, both protesters on the ground and supporters on Twitter appeared more assured that injustice could be avoided. A lot of Twitter supporters also saw livestreaming as the only way for OWS to gather evidence to help sue the police for false arrests, for damaging the protesters' property and for undue violence against the protesters. For most of the eviction, livestreaming pacified but also largely worked as the only medium that got information, images, and live coverage of the eviction outside of the Park.

OWS used streaming services offered by Ustream and Livestream extensively during their action. 1513 people tweeted about the OWS livestreams during the 15th of November, but the actual livestreamers were only a handful. A huge number of user-generated live content was produced by protesters on-the-ground and livestreamed to people watching online, with the help of mobile phones, tablets, and cameras attached to laptops. There were around 120 Occupy channels on Livestream in 2011, some of the most popular ones being globalrevolution.tv, ustream, and livestream. Tweets, retweets, and tweets with links regarding the livestreams rose significantly during the eviction, as Figure 12 shows. What also becomes obvious at this point is the ephemeral significance of these livestreams. They were only discussed and commented upon on Twitter, when protest events were taking place — note the 15th of October, when big demonstrations around the world were taking place — and rose abruptly during the eviction.

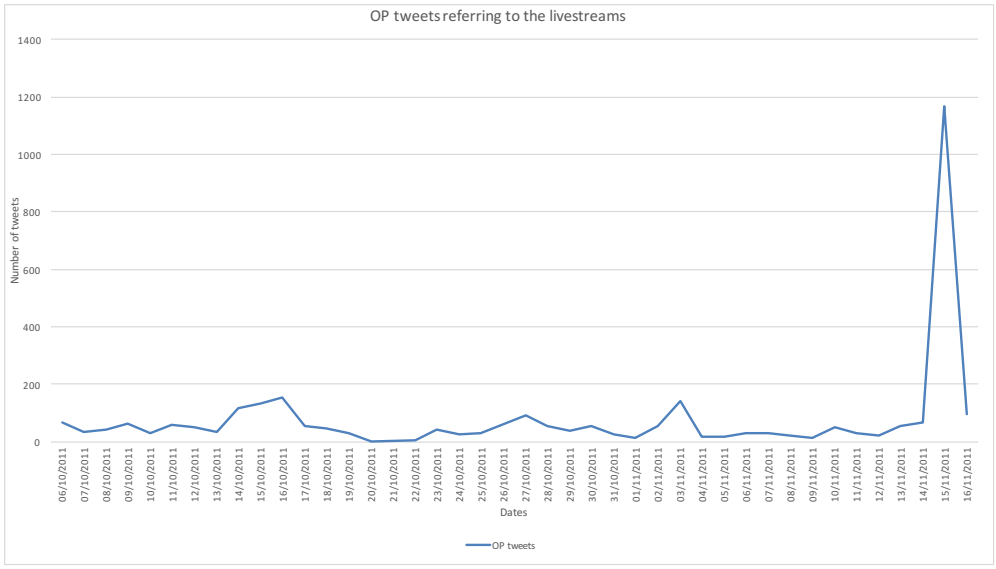

Figure 12: OP tweets referring to the livestreams during the last forty days of the movement

With 7439 of all the tweets tweeted during the eviction day referring to the livestreams, livestream became one of the dominant narratives of the media ecology of the movement. As Figures 13 and 14 below show, tweets referring to livestreams rose during the first hours of the eviction, during which people were eagerly looking for information regarding what was happening. 969 OP tweets commented on the benefits of livestreaming, on their feelings watching the livestream, and showed appreciation of their ability to have access to the park through the livestreams. 1112 tweets included links that urged people to go online and watch the livestreams. Meanwhile, 5358 retweets were retweeting the links, and people's commentary on what was happening on the livestream.

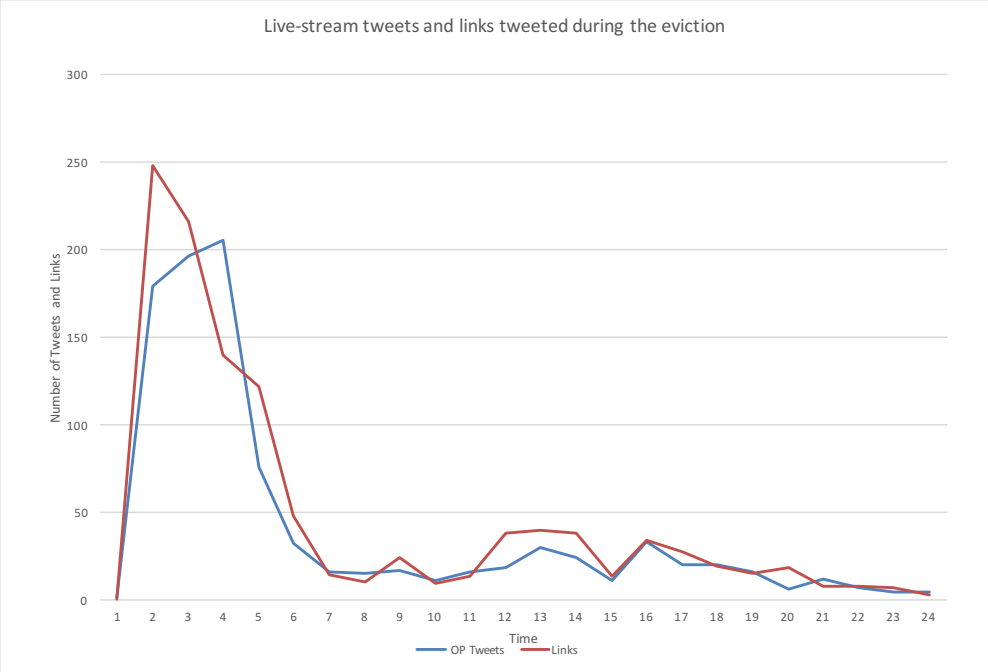

Figure 13: The distribution of OP tweets and tweets with links referring to livestreams during the eviction day

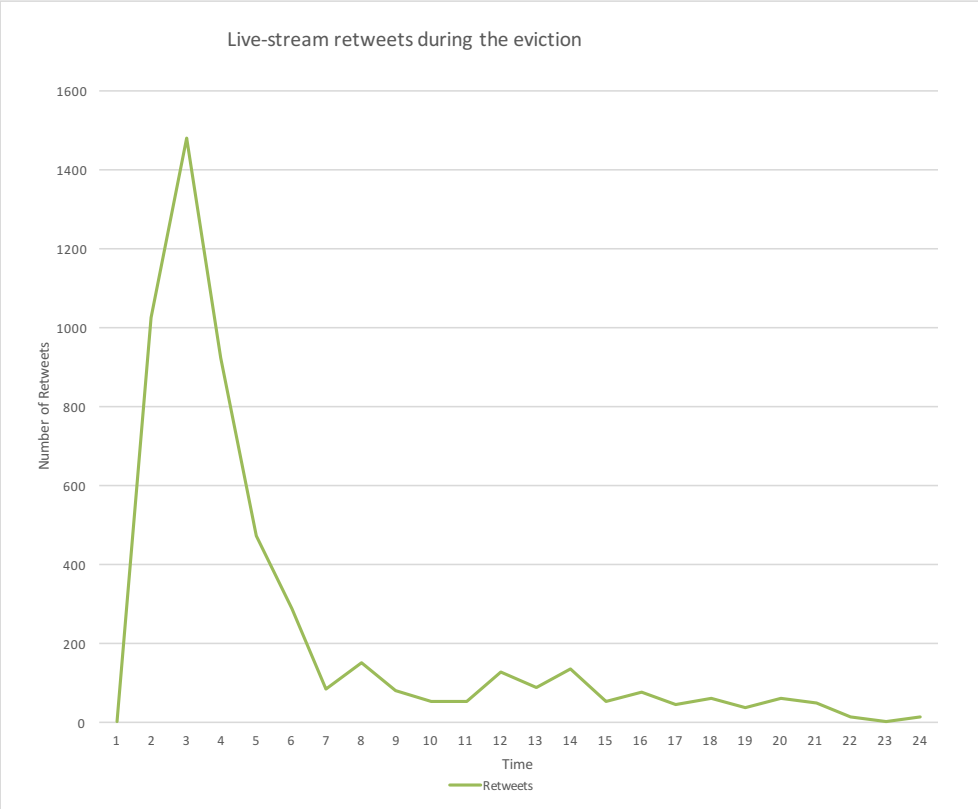

Figure 14: The distribution of retweets referring to livestreams during the eviction day

5.4.1 Livestream a protest, become famous

In the meantime, Ustream, the second livestream service that was popular among the protesters, supported the most popular livestreamer in New York, Tim Pool, by lending him better video equipment, after he managed to get more than 870 000 views on his channel. Pool, who used the Twitter handle @theother99, to tweet his livestreams and to break news, was not a trained journalist or skilled videographer, but gained a high volume of followers during the evacuation of the camp. Thus, he became one of the leading characters of the evacuation's narrative and of OWS. As Figure 15 below shows, his popularity rose significantly during the eviction, with 128 tweets referring to him directly.

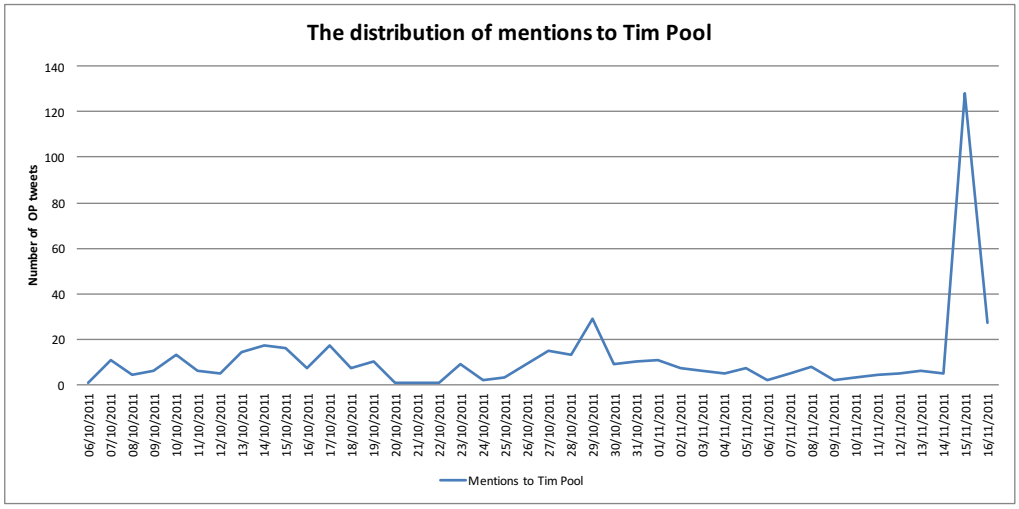

Figure 15: The distribution of mentions to Tim Pool during the last forty days of the movement

When NYPD violently evicted OWS from the encampment at Zuccotti Park, Pool was the only livestreamer broadcasting live footage from inside the park. Pool was able to win the trust of the protesters and activists on the ground and as a supporter of OWS himself managed to get shots mainstream media were not able to get. OWS protesters on the ground, as well as OWS' sympathisers on social media, welcomed his presence and reacted positively to his livestreaming as a useful tool for the movement on Twitter. His micro-fame began rising when his livestream picked up at around 2:30am on the night of the evacuation, with his call spreading on Twitter for an emergency

OWS meeting by the Wall Street bull statue, as shown in Table 15:

Date	Time	Tweet
15/11/11	*02:27*	Arizona_Abby .TheOther99 reports call for emergency #occupywallst meeting at the Wall St bull statute NOW. #ows
15/11/11	02:30	edieangelo .#TheOther99 reports call for emergency #occupywallst meeting at the Wall St bull statute NOW. #ows
15/11/11	02:49	bexagin Watching livestream from TheOther99, I realize there is something to be done. Protesters are not allowing cops to remove trucks from #OWS
15/11/11	03:40	clothes_girl best coverage is TheOther99 #OWS
15/11/11	05:16	charliprangley the idea of a press pass in the age of citizen journalism seems odd. 10,000 people are watching the stream! #ows #theother99

Table 15: A sample of tweets showing Tim Pool's livestream call for a meeting being broadcasted on Twitter

At the same time, Twitter users and OWS supporters thanked him and showed their appreciation for him by tweeting at him:

Date	Time	Tweet
5/11/11	*03:34*	*GeneDexter The absolute marriage of new media and big poppa was consummated tonight between CBSNews and TheOther99 . Great job, congrats. #OWS*
15/11/11	03:56	TheCrazyBree Oh yay! TheOther99 is back!! *continues watching* #OWS
15/11/11	04:36	DevinJMFox85 theother99 awesome coverage thank you. Head to #foleysquare! #Ows
15/11/11	04:49	NiteStar According to theother99 the press is still not being allowed near protest areas; they're being kept out. #freepress #OWS.
15/11/11	05:06	joethecritic I love journalism when it is actually practiced. theother99 #ows
15/11/11	21:02	kittypryde28 but the fact that we have the livestream is great, nobody else is giving us the facts #ows theother99
15/11/11	21:15	Blaineyb ustream tim is a total hero! livestreaming for over 19 hrs straight! #theother99 #ows #occupywallstreet #libertysquare

Table 16: A sample of tweets showing users thanking and appreciating Tim Pool for his livestream

However, at around 4:50am, tweets began reporting an attack on @theother99 from a group of 'young anarchists' who did not want to be filmed on camera:

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
15/11/11	*04:50*	sgtkeso theother99 livestream dude is getting attacked by other protesters in front of 9500 viewers. wtf? #ows
15/11/11	04:52	Afganpop TheOther99 this mini-militia should be recruited by the NYPD #ows
15/11/11	04:54	RoseWeaver12 Wow, are you watching some of these nuts on UStream? #OWS Asking them to stop filming? Do Not Stop! TheOther99
15/11/11	04:59	WomenOccupy Anyone who comes to a livestream and says stop filming isn't part of the movement; they're self-serving idealists. theOther99 ustream #ows
15/11/11	05:00	CarlosQC A small group of 4-5 “protesters” attacked briefly camera guy with TheOther99 I think there were trying to cut some NYPD cars tires? #OWS
15/11/11	05:00	phenatypical aestetix TheOther99: i still believe, however, that protesters have right to request that others not point cameras at them directly. #ows
15/11/11	05:01	WomenOccupy “ I just got attacked by the anarchists” --dude livestreaming for TheOther99 #ows Guess they didn't want to be filmed inciting violence?
15/11/11	05:04	greigforbes The guy filming for theother99 is doing a terrific job under pressure (from all sides) to show what's happening. #ows
15/11/11	05:05	ChaseRabenn Anarchists are currently yelling at TheOther99 for his non-stop live coverage #OWS

Table 17: A sample of tweets describing the attack on the livestreamer Tim Pool

Pool’s success in creating this support group on Twitter, similar to Harkinson and Olbermann earlier, made him one of the productive members of the movement’s culture. Pool earned a heroic status, which enabled him to be respected in the community and to become one of the dramatic personas of the movement’s final day. His actions and belief in the movement functioned as a representation of the movement’s aims and character, thus advancing the notion of the movement as a movement for the people, which defied mainstream media. By attaching this hero-status to him, the people who attacked him were rendered anti-heroes, whilst the connections between the two entities were allowed to form a micro-narrative around him that was greatly informed by the movement’s ideology. This gave a greater sense of urgency to the protesters when his livestream and others’ went down at certain moments.

5.4.2 Protest on Twitter as a Live Commentary pit

There were instances during the eviction when on-the-ground protesters appeared to vanish from Twitter’s timeline, either because they were moving their things, trying to get information from the police, or were talking to each other. Indeed, the responsibility of transmitting the eviction fell on both the livestreamers, and the twitterers who were watching the livestreams, and describing what they saw on Twitter.

As Table 18 below shows, social media users became alarmed and fearful whenever the livestreams went down, and would consider themselves as digital cop-watchers, calling out the police on Twitter for their violence during the eviction:

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
15/11/11	*01:21*	theriotisover livestream is down :/ Good luck tonight, #ows
15/11/11	01:41	MattVanDeventer #OWS live stream is down again. People say NYPD are blocking reporters and supporters from getting to Zuccotti Park.
15/11/11	01:41	BenDoernberg CBS helicopter livestreaming the #OWS raid just looked away, then shut down feed. #freepressisbullshit
15/11/11	01:42	psysal Wow, did the police cut wifi to #ows in NYC before the raid? Hope the livestream is down for another reason. #bigbrother #scarytimes #gousa
15/11/11	01:45	TarynAria “Don't push me” - livestream operator “Walk down Broadway, don't be a hero.”- policeman What we usually hear from bank robbers on tv. #OWS
15/11/11	01:47	Little_Luna1 One of the livestreamers has just been shut down for defending her peaceful brothers and sisters being antagonized by cops. #OWS
15/11/11	01:50	KALWinformant #OWS live stream from inside Zuccotti keeps getting knocked down. Odds NYPD are jamming?\
15/11/11	03:27	_RedTwo The #ows livestream just went down. I have a bad feeling about this.
15/11/11	03:29	lerkunAnon damn I was right ... inside zucotti NYT livestream on globalrevolution .tv is down #OWS
15/11/11	03:34	fInStef #ows livestream feeds down. seems everyone left in #zuccotti is being arrested.

Table 18: A sample of tweets showing twitterers worrying about the livestreams being down

Livestreamers and people on Twitter livestreaming were not just reporting on what was happening, but above all, were acting as the police watchdogs, holding NYPD liable for their violence, but also as the mainstream media watchdogs. However, some of the livestreamers’ success placed them in the same system they were protesting against during the eviction, thus reinforcing the very mechanisms of the mainstream media they resisted during the eviction and on previous days. These livestreamers allowed the mainstream media to tap on their livestreams and they would later be interviewed by media organisations. This raises questions regarding the ways in which livestreaming worked within OWS’ culture. However, this is a question that cannot be answered in this thesis. The focus here is on the ways in which livestreaming influenced OWS’ narratives on Twitter, and the analysis shows that talking about the livestreams was one of the biggest micro-narratives of the movement’s media ecology.

The question remains concerning how appropriate livestreaming is to social change and movements such as OWS, and to what extent it was a way for people to 'take part in something political' as Priscilla noted in her interview. A lot of the activists I interviewed mentioned that a large percentage of people showed solidarity by watching the livestreams and tweeting about the unfairness of the eviction. Tweeting about the livestreams and broadcasting the events unfolding on the streams on Twitter became a core micro-narrative during OWS' eviction day. But seldom did people do anything more than watch the livestream, or engage in further discussions than just broadcasting on Twitter. Hence, the question arising here is whether tweets referring to the livestream were a form of a political reality commentary pit. When Twitter is used as a second screen that makes commenting on things that happen on other platforms visible, it gives Twitter a political role as the medium that allows people to engage with events, as they are happening. However, the ephemerality and speed that governs the commentary pit, makes the commenting a fleeting experience too.

Looking into such micro-narratives as part of a social event, begs the question of the role of Twitter users, and the social context in which their tweets are composed and experienced. These attitudes of commenting on Twitter about what you are watching on a second screen have been widely discussed through the concept of second-screen theories (Giglietto and Selva, 2014), but they have not been discussed in connection with social movement action. The live commentary pit created by these kinds of tweets invites users to establish an emotional involvement with the on-the-ground, and to engage with strategies that have less to do with 'networked publics' and more with participation. This kind of narrative analysis uncovers cultural characteristics of OWS that are often discounted or overlooked in other approaches. This analysis has therefore shown how key events in OWS were interpreted, and created values for action through personal stories on Twitter, even if those stories were not experienced on the ground, but rather on Twitter.

5.5 The nature of OWS' media ecology narrative

In order to understand the meaning-making dynamics of OWS' social media stories, the right point to begin from would be the end, and this is what this chapter set out to do. Social movements' stories, just as any other story, are defined and usually talked about based on their 'end'. On the one hand, stories are seen through the lens of their resolution, because of the value the events, their sequence and the plot, impose on the whole story. This is mostly built upon the fact that people tell stories in order to interpret, incite, and influence others: to convey a point of view concerning what has occurred, whilst telling what has occurred. White (1980: 17) noted that 'in every fully realised story' we can find some 'kind of allegory [that] points to a moral, or endows events, whether real or imaginary, with a significance that they do not possess as a mere sequence'. This leads us to conclude that 'every historical narrative has as its latent or manifest purpose the desire to moralise the events of which it treats' (17). In the narratives of social media content—a main focus of this thesis—the inclination towards moralising the events taking place at Zuccotti Park during the evacuation is clear.

Moralisation, as a theme, structured the OWS story on Twitter and informed the whole story of the occupation by providing the principles on which the story of the movement was told. Media ecology stories of moralisation supported the idea that OWS was treated unfairly by the mainstream media and gave rise to micro-narratives that accused the mainstream media of bias, misinformation, and blatant blackout to OWS' coverage. The eviction day was a key event in the media ecology narrative of the movement. It showed how an unfolding urgent event could bring up leading characters in the story, which guide micro-narratives or whole narratives on Twitter. In this chapter, these leading characters were specific journalists and livestreamers who happened to be on-the-ground during the eviction. Along the same lines, Twitter worked as a commentary pit for the livestreaming of the eviction. People went on Twitter to describe what they were watching, attract the

attention of others to the eviction, ask for more information, and express their support to the movement. In summary, the shift of OWS, from the mainstream media ecology, that past movements relied upon, to a social media ecology, gave it different dimensions. These dimensions were led by ephemerality and speed, but also made the movement open to more participants, and gave people the opportunity to experience the movement on Twitter without physical proximity.

On the other hand, the end of the story is always treated as the consequence of the sequence of events that form the story. Instead of being seen as teleological, the end to a story can also be seen as a way of bringing closure to events that have been developing and evolving since the dawn of the story. As Trilling (1980: 135) notes: 'a beginning implies an end, with something in the middle to connect them', but a story also needs a beginning that 'is not merely the first of a series of events; it is the event that originates those that follow'. According to Trilling 'an end is not merely the ultimate event, the cessation of happening; it is a significance or at least the promise, dark or bright, of a significance' (Trilling 1972:135). What brings longevity to this significance is the linking of the beginning with the events that follow it, which form the middle of the story. This leads eventually to an end that may or may not be articulated, but is always one that seems to be inevitable. Indeed, the story's climax gives away the outcome of the whole story, by validating or proving the point of the story. Following the traditional format of a storyline, a story progresses from the first event to a string of disputes or obstacles, to the capstone of an outcome and composure at the very end. However, the traditional format is not followed here, especially when we have to deal with the case of live stories. Social media stories integrate uncertainty and vagueness, and withstand closure, so far as they deny an outcome or a resolution. Indeed, we could argue that OWS did not have an ending or a resolution that brought closure to either the story as a whole or to the activists and their supporters, and the issues they were protesting against.

This participatory nature of OWS' media ecology narrative also offers some learning opportunities and consequences for the rising social movements in the USA, and for digital culture in general. For instance, livestreaming can now be argued to be a new activism practice. We have seen several cases in the USA during 2016, in which individuals livestreamed their encounters with police, in order to post them online and ask for the support of the SMN population. We have also witnessed changes in digital platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, which have started incorporating livestreaming in their functions. This provides evidence that these platforms recognise the importance of the interactivity, and the intertextuality, offered by the combination of the livestreamed image and the commentary pit, and are trying to combine and integrate those features into a single platform. The move therefore from the mainstream media ecology of the breaking-news, which has been shifting to SMNs for some years now, to the hands of the livestreamers, the SMN users, or the citizen journalists alike, is also changing the dynamics between the media and the audiences, the audiences and the SMNs, and the SMNs and the media. As we move into a new era in which SMNs are gaining more power over the politicisation and broadcasting of events (such as OWS' eviction or the livestreaming of a political debate), future research needs to start thinking of the power structures of these platforms, the responsibilities they hold, and their transparency.

Returning back to OWS, and to conclude this chapter, the open-endedness of the OWS story has allowed it to be continued, or be re-appropriated and rearticulated, into other movements, which 're-branded' their practices and their storylines (Dean, 2014). The fact that OWS' narratives are still in process, enacted and re-enacted in other settings and contexts, makes them prevail even today, lingering around the world unfinished. These 'endless' stories can be traced back as a sequence of events. Although their build-up is symbolic, their resolution is extended indefinitely. As Thomas Leitch (1986: 122) points out, 'Stories do not necessarily promise (although they may) that conflicts will be definitely resolved or the truth manifested once and for all;

they promise only that something further will happen, or that there is something else to learn'.

This chapter focused on the media ecology narrative of the movement. It has shown the shift from the mainstream media's representation to social media. I have argued that Twitter formed a hybrid space for OWS supporters, who could be informed about the eviction and the movement on Twitter, instead of being physically present, or could rely on the mainstream media. Commenting on the livestreams and the creation of leading characters gave a different meaning to this media ecology, one in which OWS' supporters, journalists, and activists on the ground could synergistically spread, receive, and broadcast information, therefore telling the story of the movement. The following chapter takes a different turn and works as a complement to this chapter. Chapter 6 looks into the Twitter abuse narratives against OWS and argues that abuse on the platform influenced the movement's story. Indeed, it made the eviction more widely acceptable, because of the narratives it surrounded the movement with.

6. Narratives of violence on Twitter

6.1 Introduction: Abuse, Twitter, and OWS

The previous chapter examined the media ecology of the movement and argued that OWS can be considered as an example of a contemporary social movement that uses social media as its tool of representation, communication, and information transmission. Chapter 5 further illustrated how the influence of Twitter on OWS' story helped it to be politically reborn during the 'end' of the movement's story—its eviction day—and fathered leading characters in its story.

This chapter offers a different perspective on the ways in which Twitter was used as a tool against the movement. It conceptualises violence's role in OWS' processes on Twitter and works together with the following chapter to present two different views on how Twitter is deployed: first, to attack the movement through abusive and demoralising discourses, and second (in Chapter 7), as a counter-tool against violence. This chapter will highlight the differences between 'trolling', 'online violence', and 'cyberbullying', and suggest that Twitter abuse works as an all-encompassing definition of how violence against OWS on Twitter can be described. I will then discuss and illustrate, through the analysis of Twitter content, how the abuse narrative against the movement on Twitter is formed through micro-narratives that tell stories linked to the themes of the 'dirty hippies', 'rape culture', and 'anti-Americanism', which demoralise and attack OWS. A focus on these stories of violence, allows for a better understanding of the dynamics existing between social movements and social media, while at the same time complements those studies that look at the violence dynamics in social movements through holistic approaches.

In the last few years, the rise of violent incidents accompanying diverse

forms of civil unrest in the US have resurrected phenomena which have been prevalent since the early 60s: 'collective violence incidents' often refer to disputes over police violence, street violence and several disputes emerging from either clashes among diverse communities at a local level, or from more complex cases of civil unrest. While terms such as 'revolutions', 'rebellions', and 'riots', are often used to interchangeably define diverse nuances of violence or struggle in cases of civil unrest, the difference among such events and the dynamics of disorder, unrest, or social mobilisation that characterise those events is far more complex. A similar variety in terminology prevails in relation to 'violence' surrounding incidents of unrest, in the case of social movements. Violence was indeed partly responsible for undermining and ending the on-the-ground presence of OWS. This violence was both physical and digital, explicit and implicit, tangible and intangible, and it took different forms: from vitriolic mainstream media narratives, as I discussed in the previous chapter, to physical police violence on the ground (Chapter 7) and verbal assaults on Twitter, as this chapter will discuss.

The relationship between social movements, social unrest, and government-led violence or repression has been extensively discussed in sociological research (see especially work from Charles Tilly, 1978). However valuable this research has been, it has moved very little beyond the gridlock of the politics of policing (della Porta, 2006). One reason for this is that in spite of similarities, each case of social unrest or violently resolved social mobilisation can also be unique in its own right (Wilkinson, 2009; Collins, 2009). Until recently, there has been little research that helps us to understand the character of law enforcement in US social movements or indeed how individuals and groups themselves conceive the role of police violence. Similarly, studies analysing verbal abuse on Twitter, against social movements, are even more rare (with the exception of Jackson and Welles, 2016). The study of the purported violence present in and against OWS, discussed in this chapter, aims to fill this gap. It will do so by analysing Twitter data and the stories told by people tweeting during the movement's

40 last days on-the-ground. In presenting my empirical analysis I was intrigued by the following questions: Would it be relevant to think of OWS on Twitter as a sum of reacting moments, with all the ambiguities of the purely 'temporary' and 'ephemeral' attached to 'reacting points' that often twist seemingly minuscule points into invaluable catalysts for social response? Was the story of the movement consistent and was it formed by a linear narrative about the movement, or a language that was influenced by a sum of reactive instances and narrative twists and turns? I will begin examining these questions by first defining Twitter abuse, and by then moving into the micro-narratives that construct the Twitter abuse narrative against OWS on Twitter: the dirty hippies, rape culture, and OWS' anti-Americanism micro-narratives. This chapter will finally argue that the political ambiguity of OWS and the ephemeral temporality of Twitter afforded the movement with un-linear Twitter stories that worked as a stepping-stone for aggressors to attack the movement. This chapter largely focuses on thematic analysis and does not investigate the characteristics of the narrative as Chapter 4 did earlier.

6.1.1 Defining Twitter Abuse

The role of violent moments in OWS and the ramifications of violence as a narrative adapted in the movement's discourses suggest the practicality of discerning stories told on Twitter. These stories are based on at least two dimensions: Twitter abuse against OWS, and reactions to police violence against OWS. The former refers to the content of tweets written by people who used Twitter to post abusive utterances targeting the movement. The term 'abuse on Twitter' is used here then to stand for what is known in other literature as 'online violence' or 'cyberbullying' (Erdur-Baker, 2010; Vandebosch and Cleemput, 2009). This type of violence also shares similar dimensions with what is defined as 'trolling'. Yet, whilst 'trolling' is mostly for deriving amusement from another person's frustration (Herring, Job-Sluder, Scheckler and Barab, 2002), this kind of online abuse against OWS on Twitter was used to devalue, attack, and dehumanise the protest and the protesters' cause. However, I find these three terms—online violence, cyberbullying, and

trolling—problematic, since they suggest that this kind of violence is restricted to the internet. 'Abuse' can instead incorporate aggressive or demoralising tendencies, with the violence present on the internet, in this case Twitter, extending beyond online networks. Twitter abuse, in the context of this study, is then considered to include tweets that feature threatening or abusive language, tweets that encourage violence against the movement, and tweets that spread vitriolic misinformation regarding the movement. The stories these tweets tell will offer a unique and important perspective on the ways in which antagonists perceived the movement and worked as anti-heroes in the movement's story.

A lot of these disruptive users, as I will discuss later, used the argument that OWS had to 'make its demands clear' as a point for undermining the validity of the movement.[45] However, what these aggressors missed, or chose to ignore, was the foundational position of the movement, the same position that a lot of other groups in the US hold nowadays through the use of social media platforms (see for example, Black Lives Matter or Nuit Debut in France). These movements adopt a stance, which states that they 'will not be silenced'. A much more urgent aim for OWS was to reveal the broad and violent eruption of the police and the state against its people, and by extension, against the movement. The threat and the actual eviction of OWS, the excessive force, brutality, and the police-imposed media blackout during the eviction, formed another sphere of violence around OWS, creating a number of reactive narratives on Twitter. The second dimension is thus more appropriate for describing reactions to police violence on Twitter, after the interventions of NYPD to the encampment, and the eventual eviction of OWS protesters from Zuccotti Park, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Twitter abuse was no doubt part of how the movement was perceived on

[45] In fact, numerous demands were issued by OWS, as we will see in the following chapter, ranging from equality, to political and economic transformation, and the end of corruption in the US.

Twitter. The choice of language, or style of narrative, in shaping those perceptions was crucial. Key abusive themes such as defining OWS through the negative conceptualisation of hippie culture and descriptions of OWS members residing in unsanitary conditions at Zuccotti Park, shaped public perceptions. This placed the movement in the dark light of unlawfulness and criminalisation, thus influencing the public image of the movement. There are of course some positive connotations surrounding the term 'hippie', such as a person who is convivial, countercultural, and free-willed. Here, however, the stories taken into consideration are those tweets that used the term negatively, describing a hippie as a lazy, dirty person, or even a drug user. The distinctiveness of some of the individuals who resided in Zuccotti Park, the accusations levelled against them in relation to property damage and rape, as well as the 'anti-Americanism' tag given to OWS, somehow succeeded in instilling twists of violence in the story of the movement. Indeed, a complex notion of abuse on Twitter lays the ground for this chapter. This complexity includes verbal abuse expressed through social media. The purpose is not to offer a holistic analysis of online violence against OWS, but to examine a) the patterns in which social media stories of abuse have been present on Twitter through the analysis of the users' tweets, and b) the meanings these patterns have offered OWS.

Stories of violence varied, highlighting the extent to which Twitter was used to abuse the movement's protesters, or denigrate its causes. The volume of stories about violence fluctuated from day to day, according to a number of variables including:

- The stage that the movement was at (its temporality)
- The strength of support (its solidarity)
- The vigour of its opposition on Twitter (negative affect)
- The specificity of the violent event or discussion (its key events), and
- Its image in mainstream media (its mainstream media ecology)

This number of variables interacted and thereby complicated the dimensions

and magnitude of stories discussing violence in the narratives of the movement on Twitter.

It is essential to look into the influence violent culture may have had on both the movement as a whole and on the construction of some of the fundamental micro-narratives at the heart of OWS. It will be argued that even though we cannot view OWS through the lens of police brutality alone, or merely as a violent movement per se, what becomes clear is that events of Twitter abuse managed, to some extent, to erode the language of OWS. The abuse micro-narratives leading to the OWS eviction were manifold and polymorphic and, as this chapter will show, the impact violence had on the discussions and reactions taking place on Twitter sometimes brought forth ephemeral moments of chaos and disorder. An important aim of this chapter will then be to identify the complex ways in which Twitter abuse shaped the micro-narratives of textual violence, thus unveiling the ambiguous character of Twitter.

6.2 Making sense of Twitter Abuse against OWS

There were multiple incidents that, due to their extremity, drew attention to and were used by aggressors on Twitter to attack the movement's principles and beliefs. These added to the notion of the movement as being a disorganised group of people, who had nothing else to do than cause trouble. While some stories of Twitter abuse usually referred to violent incidents, rapes, and disturbances that took place on the grounds of Zuccotti Park, others resorted to labelling the movement with common epithets attached to anarchism and anti-Americanism. It is thus imperative to stress that the following sections on Twitter abuse rely in their biggest part, but not exclusively, on stories from disruptive users. Only a few stories showed support and stood against this kind of violence. This was because Twitter abuse was chiefly sourced from and developed by individuals who used insulting language and threats to attack the movement. Their abusive tweets, which used disruptive events that took place during the movement's

occupation at Zuccotti Park, bred micro-narratives that primarily invalidated OWS through sarcasm, attacks, and slander. For this reason, it remains important to look into the ways that Twitter abuse was perceived, and through which stories on Twitter, in order to put together the narrative of this kind of violence. The following sections will thus analyse Twitter abuse by focusing on its three dominant micro-narratives: (a) the movement as a congregation of 'dirty hippies' who ravaged Zuccotti Park; (b) the movement as infiltrated by rape culture; (c) the movement as an anarchist, anti-American movement and a threat to American interests.

The data on the micro-narratives of Twitter abuse will allow us to trace in which moments specific stories became dominant and to look at the temporality of the movement in a closer fashion. In order to provide a context for the arguments and generalisations of this chapter, I will now briefly review the numbers behind the rises, falls, and fluctuations of the Twitter violence narrative, and will discuss the differences and similarities between the three micro-narratives constructing it, before discussing each of them separately.

In the forty days between 6th October and 14th of November 2011, 13 524 tweets were coded as part of the Twitter abuse narrative; these tweets amounted to an average of 158 tweets per day. As Figure 16 shows, the stories fluctuated in the first week and rose sharply, reaching the number of 642 tweets per day by the 15th of October. After a fall between the 18th and 22nd of October, the narrative started to increase its presence on Twitter again and reached a peak on the 3rd of November. After fluctuating for ten more days, abuse stories begun to rise until they reached their highest point on the 26th of October. A subsequent decline in the narrative was quickly set by a few stable days, until it rose slightly on the 31st, before falling right after again. On the 3rd of November, 542 tweets gave rise to this narrative again but from the 4th to the 13th of November the narrative fluctuated lower until it started to rise up again on the 14th. This was a day before the eviction of

the movement from the park took place. What is important to note here is that the narrative had its peaks and turns, and all coincided with days in which violent events happened at Zuccotti Park, as we will see below. In this discussion the concept of ephemerality will become significant.

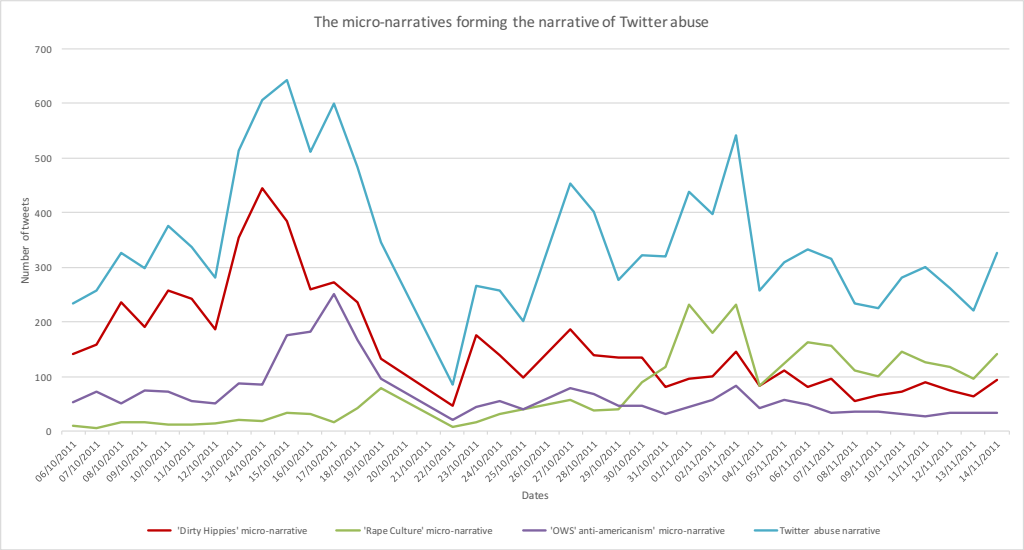

Figure 16: The distribution of the micro-narratives forming the Twitter abuse narrative during the last forty days of the movement

The close reading of these tweets uncovered both the reasons behind these spikes, as well as the kinds of stories that structured the micro-narratives. First, and as I mentioned previously, on the 9th of October 2011 the UK's *Daily Mail* newspaper published an article titled, 'Stinking up Wall Street: Protesters accused of living in filth as shocking pictures show one demonstrator defecating on a POLICE CAR'.[46] Stories referring to this defecation incident caused a spike in the narrative on the 10th of October, which was further fuelled by Mayor Bloomberg's statement, which suggested that as long as protesters operated under the law, they would not be arrested. Similarly, the 14th and 15th of October were important days for the

[46] The UK's Daily Mail article that appeared on the 9th of October 2011, titled 'Stinking up Wall Street: Protesters accused of living in filth as shocking pictures show one demonstrator defecating on a POLICE CAR' gave rise to more mainstream media's adoption of the same attitude towards OWS. Hannah Roberts, 2011, 'Stinking up Wall Street: Protesters accused of living in filth as shocking pictures show one demonstrator defecating on a POLICE CAR', *The Daily Mail,* 9 October. Available from: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2046586/Occupy-Wall-Street-Shocking-photos-protester-defecating-POLICE-CAR.html> [27 December 2015]

movement: on the 14th Brookfield Properties—the owners of the park—postponed the cleaning of Zuccotti Park, while on the 15th of October various stories reacted to the global protests in support of OWS. As we move into the de-coding of the micro-narratives during these days, it becomes clear that OWS was a combination of key events that structured a story with its ups and downs. It was a process populated by 'moments', turning events and tipping points. It therefore cannot be defined by just the great gatherings of people at Zuccotti Park, or the massive number of tweets about it, but it should instead be talked about in terms of a set of small moments; seemingly inconsequential catalyst events that were usually fuelled by affective micro-narratives. In this narrative, the affect was largely negative. It becomes, therefore, more relevant to think of OWS' story on Twitter as a sum of reacting and fleeting moments, with all the ambiguities of the purely 'temporary' and 'ephemeral' attached to reacting points that twisted specific events into invaluable catalysts for social response. For example: the defecation incident.

Moving into a more detailed look into the micro-narratives, I will now reveal how Twitter's ephemeral and ambiguous character unearthed micro-narratives that were directly reactive to events happening on the ground, or in other public spheres, such as the mainstream media. As can be seen in Figure 16, the most active period of the 'dirty hippies' micro-narrative was in the middle of October. A total of 444 stories emerged, almost a month after the movement's encampment at Zuccotti park, accumulating 1368 OP tweets between the 12th and 15th of October.

Similarly, the rumours that began to rise on the 13th of October regarding Mayor Bloomberg's announcement about the demonstrators having to clear the park, as well as the presence of cleaning crews at the camp, gave rise to stories that attacked OWS, calling the protesters dirty hippies. The eventual cancellation of the park's clean up by Brookfield Office Properties in the early morning of the 14th of October, gave a new breath to the protesters and their

supporters, but did not deter their attackers from slandering OWS. Admittedly, it appears that as soon as official bodies, such as the Mayor of New York, the owners of the park, and NYPD, disseminated a message that portrayed the park as dirty, and the protesters as living in unsanitary conditions, Twitter abuse rose up, aggressively denouncing the movement as a dirty hippie movement. The development of the 'dirty hippies' micro-narrative thus led, for the most part, the Twitter abuse narrative in October, with tweets fluctuating from the high number of 176 on the 23rd and 187 on the 27th, to 134 tweets on the 30th.

Distinctly, the OWS' anti-Americanism micro-narrative almost reached in activity the 'dirty hippies' micro-narrative, by rising to 182 tweets on the 16th of October and growing even more on the 17th of October, with 250 tweets. As the discourse analysis of the tweets will later support, this spike was due to the news that the American Nazi Party expressed their support of OWS, as well as to the preceding global protests in support of OWS on the 15th. The OWS' anti-Americanism micro-narrative though never managed to catch the surge of the 'dirty hippies' micro-narrative. It, however, fluctuated steadily on an average of 67 tweets per day, except for a sudden jump on the 3rd of November, with 83 tweets. However, it then remained rather stable until the 15th of November. It seems that the OWS' anti-Americanism micro-narrative was an important micro-narrative constructing the Twitter violence narrative in the week of the 13th to the 20th of October, but it then became one of the lower ranking micro-narratives, dominated by the 'dirty hippies' stories after the 25th of October, and by the 'rape culture' micro-narrative after the 29th of October. As other events popped up and news of Nazi support of the movement faded away, aggressors turned to other kinds of stories to abuse the movement on Twitter, such as the 'rape culture' micro-narrative. Therefore, ephemerality and temporality became key characteristics in the development of the abuse narrative. Aggressors chose to base their stories on what each day brought up as an opportunity for them to attack the movement. The 13th of November, the day of the attempted

'clean-up' of the park and its eventual cancellation on the 14th, gave rise to abuse stories that linked OWS with insanitation and unhealthy conditions.

The 'rape culture' micro-narrative correlated with the 'anti-Americanism' one for a few long periods. However, whilst OWS' anti-Americanism micro-narrative seemed to be powerful in the midst of October, its significant drop on the 17th to 18th caused the opposite effect to the 'rape culture' micro-narrative, which peaked upwards. Even when the rest of the narratives dropped on the 19th, the 'rape culture' stories formed the stronger and leading micro-narrative of the Twitter abuse narrative on the day. Figure 16 also illustrates how 'rape culture' grew to 78 tweets on the 19th, leading with stories arguing that OWS protests all over the country discouraged sexual assault victims from contacting the police. It then stabilised to an average of 30 tweets for almost 10 days, until it began to pick up on the 30th with 90 tweets, the 31st with 117 tweets, and in November by rising even more to 232 tweets on the 1st, 181 tweets on the 2nd and 232 tweets on the 3rd. Indeed, as soon as the first rapes became public, and the allegations turned into truth after the 30th of October, the 'rape culture' micro-narrative became the protagonist of the wider abuse narrative. Even after the plummet of the 4th of November it led the Twitter abuse narrative until the 14th of November, on an average of 128 tweets per day. These rape stories had a deteriorating influence on the development of OWS, and it was an element Sara elaborated on, during her interview:

> The park towards the end, in the last two or three weeks, became different, a kind of a darker place. The weather was getting really cold and people were starting to lose their footing. And they were more and more people coming to the park that were, you know, of questionable mentality. There was a lot of effort being put into the park being a safe space, *but the park became burdensome in some way*. There was a lot of effort put into maintaining the space of the park, maintaining the integrity of it, maintaining the contact of those within it. But, there were people that were assaulted

> inside the park and the press had a field day with that, as you expect they would. […] The thing about these movements is that they attract all types of people. So in there you are going to have people that are attracted to it because they have a personal attachment to it, or because they just feel like taking advantage of the rest. We had *those moments, and those moments changed us and the movement*. […] You would have people who would come to the table, coming from a wide variety of places that all reflected a certain feeling of victimization. And you are also going to get some people that are going to come to the table who aren't getting the mental health services they need. And they are showing up, and what can you do? And then you'll have other people coming to the table with all their package of everything that is fucked up in their minds. And so you are going to attract some people who aren't following the same thing that you are following.
>
> Sara, 26, student

In Sara's response, the stage at which the movement was (the last weeks), formed an important catalyst for OWS' story. However, what also stands out from her story, is the weight she puts on describing the space of Zuccotti Park as *burdensome* and the people who came to the park in its late stages, as an obfuscated group. Evidently, it was not just the mainstream media reports, the abuse , or even the strength of the support it got on the ground that caused the movement to decline. The deterioration of the movement also resulted from the lack of resonance in the movement's on-the-ground stories. OWS' set of narratives, which developed from the values of equality, tolerance, and fairness started to blur, since the people residing in Zuccotti Park were not necessarily protesters or supporters of the movement, but were instead looking 'for their own cause' as Shawn pointed: assaulting women and men. As Aaron also pointed out, not everyone was 'on the same page' in the park. Even with the all-encompassing narrative of equality, the movement could not be cohesive, because the meanings of the park's residents were not interconnected. Some of them were there to take advantage of people and the movement or did not know what the

movement was about. These ambiguities surrounding the on-the-ground protesters were used to attack and devalue the movement on Twitter.

The first level of the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the micro-narratives indicates that they depend to a great degree on key events happening outside Twitter, but also on the coherence of its supporters' group and the stage of the movement's story. This strengthens the chapter's argument that Twitter is used more as a reactive tool, instead of as a constant stream of opinions and ideas. The analytical sections that follow untangle the narrative's ups and downs by taking a closer look at the ways in which each micro-narrative of the Twitter abuse narrative shaped the way Twitter abuse was carried out, and how this abusive language was perceived by OWS' supporters on Twitter.

6.2.1 The 'dirty hippies' micro-narrative

The time and place of the occupation played an essential role in the formation of OWS as a strong movement for equality. However, the way people who gathered at Zuccotti Park looked, their attitudes, and slogans, made others draw parallels to the 60s hippie movement, in a negative light. At the beginning of November and in the 39 days that preceded the evacuation of the camp, the concept of the camp as a place in which hippie culture propagated, gained more ground in mainstream media representations of OWS.[47] As I have already mentioned in the previous chapter, even some relatively favourable mainstream media like *The Huffington Post*, *The Daily Show*, and the *New York Times,* focused more on this aspect of OWS' story, rather than on highlighting the movement's causes and goals. As soon as it became evident that the occupiers would be allowed to stay in the park, after the 14th of November, similar kinds of stories that stressed the parallels between hippie culture and OWS appeared in the

[47] For instance, John Cassidy, 2011, 'The Anti-Wall Street Protesters' Best Friend: Ray Kelly', *The New Yorker*, 29 September. Available from: <http://www.newyorker.com/rational-irrationality/the-anti-wall-street-protesters-best-friend-ray-kelly>. [27 December 2015]

mainstream media and also gained momentum on Twitter.[48]

There was no significant evidence in the data analysed here, however, that the aggressors who called the occupiers 'dirty hippies' on Twitter actually saw them, or visited the park. The assumption here is that their Twitter abuse tactics were, by and large, coming from a distance. It is important to note though that the attitude towards the protesters shifted more to the 'dirty hippies' characterisation after a *Daily Mail UK* article reported on someone defecating on the street next to a police car, accompanied by a photo of the incident. Indeed, events such as this one were justifiably used as an excuse to define the movement as untrustworthy, hippie, and treacherous[49] on mainstream media, and were subsequently picked up and dragged along on Twitter. Shawn, during his interview, and similar to Sara's position above, supported this by suggesting that the ambiguity that enveloped OWS, because of the multitude of individuals and their actions, had indeed influenced the movement's image:

> Towards the end of the park's occupation there were lots of problems with the way people were camping in the park. So, there were things like some people in the park were active crazy, there were some things like: people didn't have any sanitation system in the park, or you would get stories from the press with pictures of some anarchist. There was a story

[48] On the 7th of October 2011, the New York Times, published an Op-ed titled, 'Wall Street Weeks', which began with the argument "The Occupy Wall Street encampment in Lower Manhattan is covered with damp sleeping bags, interspersed among piles of wet, abandoned clothes. Molding stuff is everywhere. It looks like a scene from "Outdoor Hoarders." This was one of the articles that gave rise to more criticism of the hygiene of the park.
Gail Collins, 2011, 'Wall Street Weeks', *The New York Times,* 7 October. Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/08/opinion/collins-wall-street weeks.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0>. [27 December 2015]

[49] The hype that described the protesters as 'hippies' developed even more in the following days, with the Washington Times publishing an article titled 'Nugent: Nobody needs Michael Moore's hypocritical advice: Wall Street protesters learning to display a nose for nonsense,' where Wall Street protesters are characterised as "hygiene-challenged" "stinky hippies".
Ted Nugent, 2011, *The Washington Times,* 'Nugent: Nobody needs Michael Moore's hypocritical advice: Wall Street protesters learning to display a nose for nonsense', 14 October. Available from: < http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/oct/14/nobody-needs-michael-moores-hypocritical-advice/> [27 December 2015]

> about someone defecating on a police car's door. And then we would be like, 'oh this is such bullshit, because they are totally maligning all of us and all of these solid people'. And then we would look around each other and we would be like 'Buuuut…'
>
> Shawn, 34, teacher

Clearly, the reports on the camp and the defecation incident were not made up. Likewise, the gathering of people from different ideologies and attitudes, and the difficulties of co-existing within the makeshift occupation of a public space, intensified the problem of defining the protesters through ambiguous concepts. However, some users on Twitter took advantage of these flaws to attack and invalidate the movement to such an extent that their tweets could be considered as violent. These opponents justified their Twitter abuse of OWS by depersonalising the protesters, defining them as 'hippies', 'dirty', 'filthy', and by promoting the pressing need to evacuate the park. The 'dirty hippies' micro-narrative was certainly a concept that attempted to portray the occupiers not as a social movement related to financial, cultural, and social inequalities, but as a group of people who did not have a purpose or any sense of morality and respect for the area they occupied, or the people they affected with their actions.

The Twitter abuse stories forming the 'dirty hippies' micro-narrative (Figure 17) show a downward linear trend, in which stories adding to the micro-narrative decreased over time, and as we can observe, the volume of the stories was higher in October than in November. As Figure 17 below further shows, the dirty hippies' narrative first peaked upwards on the 7th of October and on the 10th, 14th, and 15th of the same month. It started losing track right after the 19th of October and remained relatively stable and on the low until before the evacuation of the camp on the 15th of November.[50] The discourse analysis of specific days that structured this micro-narrative will now shed more light on the way Twitter abuse worked through the micro-narrative of

[50] The 15th of November is not included in Figure 17 because its spike skews the rest of the data on the chart. A full chart can be found in the Appendices.

the ‘dirty hippies’ on Twitter. I choose here to focus on the most active days of the micro-narrative, the 10th, 14th, and 15th of October (as can be traced below) and look closer into the stories that built it.

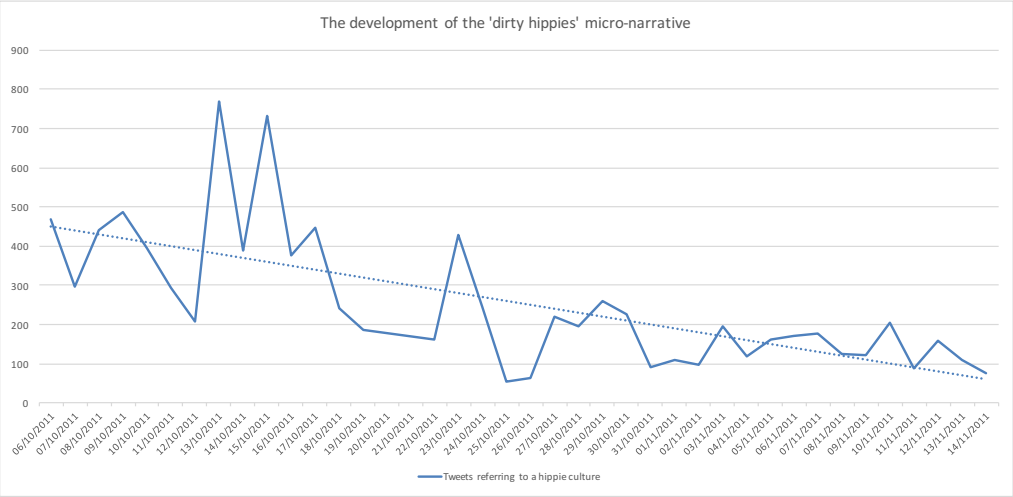

Figure 17: The distribution of the ‘dirty hippies’ micro-narrative through the forty last days of the movement

The analysis of these abusive tweets showed that the 982 tweets constructing the ‘dirty hippies’ micro-narrative, between these three key days, was divided into eight kinds of stories in which users:

1. Expressed support or appealed for support to OWS;
2. Called the protesters dirty, filthy, and/or unshowered;
3. Called the protesters ‘hippies’ explicitly;
4. Made reference to the defecation incident, identifying the movement with it;
5. Criticised the insulting nature of calling OWS 'hippies' or ‘dirty’;
6. Promoted violence against, or encouraging the eviction of OWS;
7. Accused MSM of misrepresenting OWS’; and
8. Made fun of OWS.

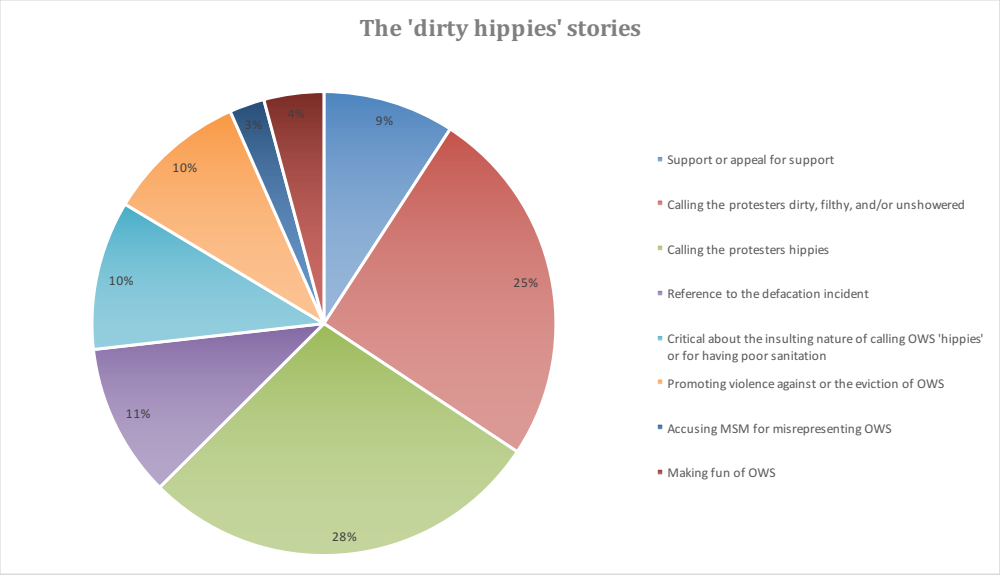

Figure 18: The themes of the stories constructing the 'dirty hippies' micro-narrative

As Figure 18 shows, more than half of the tweets (53%) focused on calling the protesters dirty, filthy and/or unshowered, or calling them hippies explicitly. The defecation incident also drew attention to and was used as a joke about how OWS was comprised of people who did not have proper hygiene practices and did not care about sanitation. 10% (n=98) of the tweets promoted violence against OWS or were calling for the evacuation of the park, on the basis of the protesters being dirty hippies, while 4% of the stories made fun of OWS in the context of their poor hygiene, or perceived status as hippies. At the same time, 19% (n=186) of the stories of the 'dirty hippie' micro-narrative accused MSM of misinforming and misrepresenting OWS, showed support for or appealed for support from OWS, thus asking people to ignore the 'dirty hippies' definition. At the same time 10% (n=97) of the tweets were critical about the insulting nature of calling OWS 'hippies' or 'dirty', and accused those who spread this kind of information of being fabricators. This elevated support for the movement to a total of 39% (n=383) within this micro-narrative. To what degree this support actually helped the movement or instead allowed the micro-narrative of the 'dirty hippies' to spread more widely is unclear. However, it is safe to assume that the attempts to fight back against the 'dirty hippies' micro-narrative may

have had the unintended consequence of circulating the information more broadly. Instead of defending the movement, this actually dispersed the micro-narrative further, attracting more opponents and more aggressors (cf. Greenberg in Forbes, 2007). This is one of the complications linked to the instantaneity and information transmission of Twitter. When a story is formed and spread on Twitter, either if it is true or false, it quickly gains momentum and propulsion, and its circulation may reach high intensity if it finds the right online routes.

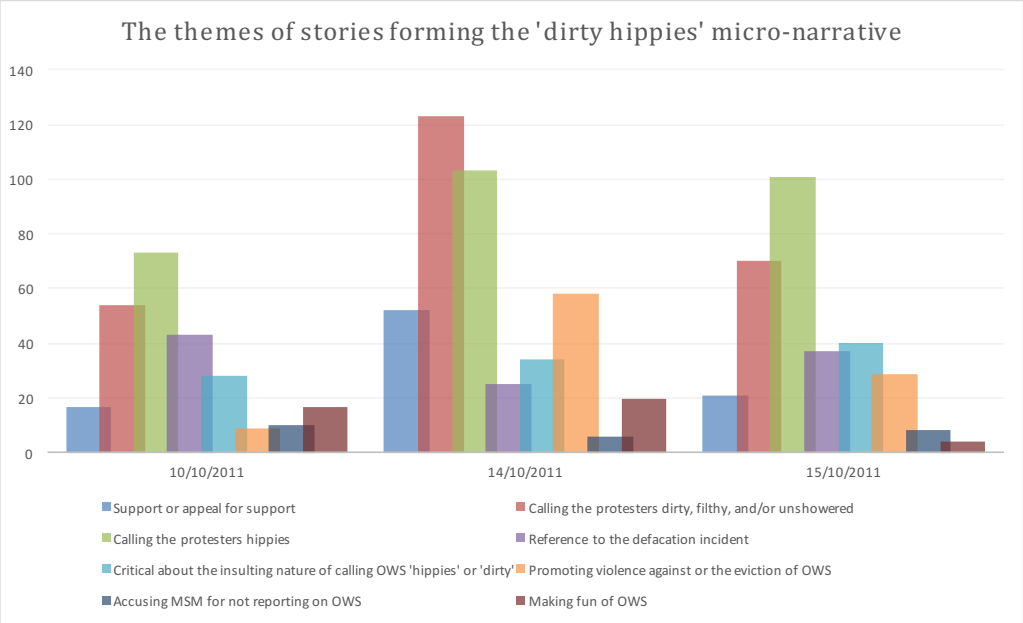

Figure 19: The themes of stories forming the 'dirty hippies' micro-narrative as distributed through its three more active days

Upon closer investigation of the diffusion of these stories during the key days of interest, all three days seemed linked to the core story of calling protesters hippies. However, the stories' volume changed according to the day. For example, stories calling the protesters dirty, filthy, and unshowered were much more prevalent on the 14th, on the day that the sanitisation of the camp was due to take place, which was eventually cancelled. These stories experienced a noticeable drop on the 15th, where the popular storyline of calling the protesters hippies reappeared and governed the micro-narrative, similar to the 10th of October. It is also interesting to

observe that references to the defecation incident were much more popular on the 10th than on the 14th and the 15th, which was right after the *Daily Mail* had published the photo of the incident happening. Meanwhile tweets supporting OWS took off on the 14th, but were much less present on the 15th. It also appears that stories that promoted violence against OWS or the eviction of OWS went hand in hand with the spike of stories defining the protesters filthy hippies. Stories that promoted violence against OWS on the basis of the protesters being dirty hippies were rare before the 14th, but after the first intervention of the police and some clashes with the protesters on the 14th, stories that were much more abusive and violent against OWS came forward. This, as I have mentioned earlier, may have been the result of the averted eviction. Therefore, the stories were indeed dependent on the events that structured the movement. They were not only social movement accusations that prevailed through the years, but the aggressors had also on-the-ground events they could link to, in order to support their abuse. Additionally, this attempt gave aggressors the foothold to believe that since authorities considered that the park should have been cleaned, then it meant that the protesters were part of a dirty movement that deserved to be evacuated. It did not matter to them whether that evacuation was in fact violent. Most of them, as a matter of fact and as we will see below, were calling for a violent evacuation of the park. This also points to how influential the vigour of the movement's opposition was to the story of the movement. When aggressors found a steppingstone to justify their disagreement with the movement, or even their vitriol, the abuse rose even higher.

The largest percentage of the tweets forming this micro-narrative exhibits the largely critical character of the movement's opponents on Twitter. The abusive nature of their language and their communication form an impugning criticism of the protesters, and by extension the movement; drawing a portrait of the movement as 'made up of filth', filled with 'lazy, dirty people' who 'never shower' and who fouled the park (samples of such tweets can be found in Table 19):

Date	Time	Tweet
10/10/11	12:59	staceyoliver Throwing up my jazz hands to the Flea Partiers. What day # is this without a bath? Peeewwwwww! #OWS
10/10/11	16:16	TrentD1 New stimulus proposal: if #OWS participants start bathing, they'll create tons of new jobs in the soap industry. #tcot #p2 #OccupyTheShower
10/10/11	18:31	fredontwittur Does the #ows crowd realize that sanitation isn't capitalist?
14/10/11	07:43	HiramJGoldstein rraix The #ows don't have jobs because they won't submit to THE MAN. Also, because they won't bathe.
14/10/11	08:09	ThatBobBeal Yet to understand what the Point of the #OWS movement is about...please stop comparing them to the civil rights movement,those folks shower!
14/10/11	08:27	Radiovixen In honor of #ows, I didn't shower this morning before work. I'll shower later. I think I'll protest that we still don't have a Keurig
14/10/11	15:43	stephenLweiss the rain is nature's way of saying to #OWS “u people stink & if u wont shower i'll just rain on u” imagine the stench if it were mid-August
15/10/11	12:01	ShoqsAss #OWS stinks. Take a bath, use a crapper “get a job. Sex, drugs, crime” filth make up #OccupyWallStreet. #tcot #p2
15/10/11	15:57	SoTxDiesel The rise of lazy, dirty people has gone global. #OWS
15/10/11	18:33	MichaelClear ggreenwald Yes, they're also about never showering. #OWS

Table 19: A sample of tweets constructing the ‘dirty hippies’ micro-narrative

The rhetoric that OWS’ opponents on Twitter drew upon, between being dirty and being hippie, extenuated the picture of the protesters as being freeloader ‘slackers’: noisy, confused privileged kids who depended financially on their parents, as the tweets below (Table 20) show:

Date	Time	Tweet
10/10/11	14:46	jess_nnz CharlesBivona I bet most of the hippies on #OWS don't even vote
10/10/11	16:14	LMack49 We have seen this crowd before #OWS, they were the 60's free-love, free-sex, and free-drugs hippie socialist! #tcot #tlot #GOP
10/10/11	19:53	brockboehlert What do you call 20 female hippies in a steam bath? Gorillas in the mist. #OWS
14/10/11	08:18	eliasisquith oh my god i hate the drummers at #ows so much. i know this is all about solidarity and community but fuck those fucking hippie bastards.
14/10/11	21:02	leanitright god I love #ows !! no fricken hippies at Starbucks tonight!! #hippiessuck #wtf #occupyyourparentsbasement
14/10/11	23:39	Terminyc If you dress like a hippie, are over 30 and mom paid for any of your clothes, you should be ashamed #OWS #iamthe53
15/10/11	09:22	Suckitpoor Dear slacker hippies - if you like socialism save up and buy a ticket to Canada or the UK and don't let door hit you in ass #p2 #Tcot #ows
15/10/11	11:16	drtwitstein Who knew the world had so many lazy hippies of so many colors and shapes? We will not be silenced #ows
15/10/11	13:15	dwdawson1 Not quite sure what to make of this occupy wall street ordeal. Looks like a bunch of brainwashed hippies. Fuck #ows! Get a real job!

Table 20: A sample of tweets describing the protesters as slackers, noisy, confused, privileged kids

The defecation incident, which happened on the 9th of October, endorsed these ideas and the identification of OWS with filth and uncivilised practices, cultivating at the same time an even more sarcastic attitude, and making fun of the protesters. In many instances, protesters were called ‘occupoopers’

and were identified as people who would defecate in public (Table 21):

Date	Time	Tweet
10/10/11	06:58	Gunservatively Take the pledge: I promise to take a shower today and not crap on cop cars. #OccupyCommonSense #ows #libtards
10/10/11	16:25	RTM_Roma If you #OccupyWallStreet #ows people want credibility STOP pooping all over the city. #DefecateWallStreet
10/10/11	17:31	thisgirlisright Could #ows at least use a pooper scooper when showing us what democracy looks like?
14/10/11	05:36	FLItalia0629 The only type of 'movement' #OWS is a bowel movement...on the streets, on police cars, in the park... Unbathed, stinky, unsanitary, GROSS!
14/10/11	14:51	exposeliberals Zucotti Park now is Poocotti Park #tcot #tlot #ows #dirtyhuppies
15/10/11	15:48	TwitTurdDaily brandondarby more #OWS pick-up lines 'poop here often?'
15/10/11	19:26	Palin_Posse Why'm I reading that some of the Occupoopers #OWS actually QUIT their jobs 2 attend protests? Something just so nonsensical abt that #Fail
15/10/11	21:56	Jimi971 Ya see it is American and freedom of speech to poop on cop cars. You and I have always known this about pooping rights. #OWS

Table 21: A sample of tweets describing the protesters as unsanitary

Continuing their fight against, OWS, opponents on Twitter called all the more for the eviction or violent removal of the protesters from the park. With reasons ranging from costs to the city, to the 'filthy conditions' of the camp, some reactions to the movement sounded alarmingly violent (Table 22):

Date	Time	Tweet
10/10/11	00:41	Jeff_Ellington1 derekahunter Hey, let's go #hippie hunting in Manhattan. I heard the game warden say they need to thin the herd. #OWS cc: wordymcwriter
10/10/11	18:34	MarisolBarton Use water cannon on the #OWS crowd: it'll kill 2 birds w/ 1 stone. Streets will be cleared & the creeps will finally get a bath! #Teaparty
14/10/11	05:47	Swanny_Sez Really, is it that difficult to machine-gun a bunch of infantalized hippies and union thugs? Where have ya gone Bull Connor? #OWS
14/10/11	05:51	mklein35 The US Military should give 48 hours to demand to clean #OWS Zucati park. I'd love to see the hippies refuse to leave. #Funtimes
14/10/11	06:48	hankishtwit Hard working taxpayers getting screwed by #OWS mutants! More than $2,000,000 in NYPD OT not including sanitation! #Libtards
14/10/11	14:08	joe_dougherty You know, shame it's not about 20 degrees colder in NY. Wetting #OWS squatters down with firehoses would be really effective with a chill.
14/10/11	14:48	CigarPundit If Bloomberg had any balls he'd have NY's finest kicking hippie ass & clearing the streets #OWS #LiberateWallStreet #occupywallstreet
14/10/11	23:11	N4TBG Nothing makes me smile like a seeing cop beating the crap out of a hippie #ows.
15/10/11	21:42	EvilMustard567 Wish the #OWS douches were in WWII Germany they could be right next to the Jews taking a gas shower. #occupywallst #occupywallstreet
15/10/11	21:48	NoHoKev I say we start building a human centipede from these fools. It will solve the feeding and sanitation problem at once! #occupywallstreet #OWS

Table 22: A sample of tweets calling for a violent removal of the protesters from the park

All of the above stories clash with tweets that tried to resist them, asking for proof of the 'filth' they are talking about and calling their tweets an effort to discredit the movement. Telling stories and reacting to tweets that called

OWS a hippie movement, some users tried change the minds of people who viewed the movement as 'just hippies and anarchists' and ensured their opponents that they would not give up, even if they were called names. Others even said that not everyone looked like a hippie and that the park was a well-organised space that looked nothing like an unclean space (Table 23):

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
10/10/11	11:44	cwalsh516 Party of dirty tricks actively seeking to discredit #OWS- anything to squash peaceful protest of corporate fleecing of middle class
10/10/11	12:59	OWSLibertarian Mainstream preservers of the status quo denounce #OWS as 'dirty hippies'. Really? That's the WORST you guys have to say? I'm crushed! LOL
10/10/11	20:34	ACanada2 #OWS Sorry infiltraitors. Your 'Smear' campaigns will not work. U should go back to enslaving elephants for your 'dirty' work.
14/10/11	09:18	weezmgk The 'dirty hippie' jibe on #ows from far-right kookbags is now so worn as to be self parody. Grow the fuck up.
14/10/11	10:08	NoahMullins #OWS is becoming a true social movement. Ignore the those who call you dirty, and foolish; Character assassination is for the desperate
14/10/11	12:20	jnthnwwlsn The attacks on #OWS I've heard are 'dirty hippies' & 'iPhone-user hypocrites' and 'no message' I get 2 and 3, but they can't all be true.
15/10/11	11:58	tony_altamirano Just hippies and anarchists huh? 951 cities, 82 countries and growing. Massive crowds everywhere. It's a Worldwide movement. #O15 #OWS
15/10/11	13:55	ritwickgupta U can call us hippies or whatever you want .... But we are not moving from what we believe in #OWS
15/10/11	15:42	DDSSBlog Makes me sick to see conservatives and the GMFU crowd shit on #OWS by calling them 'hippies' and 'lazy'.
15/10/11	18:25	AsaSomers Visited #OWS world HQ at zucotti park. How can u say they are unorganized? It's its own CITY w hospital, kitchen, sanitation, press

Table 23: A sample of tweets showing support for OWS and debunking the negative 'hippie' label

These reactions, that stressed the insulting nature of tweets referring to protesters as hippies and filthy, were also supported by tweets that were clearly backing the movement and did not consider the definition of a hippie as a derogatory term. These users identified themselves with OWS, whatever the accusations coming from the opponents were, and even appealed for support for the movement:

Date	Time	Tweet
10/10/11	10:40	jayandrewallen #ows #occupybellingham Ignore hippie-punching. Eschew bickering. Stick w/ FACTS. Reality's on on ur side.
10/10/11	21:17	SeedBomz4Change I'd like to see fire depts lend mobile shower units to #OWS. & comedians could set up USO-like shows to keep the chilly occupants smiling.
10/10/11	21:45	Occupyiforgot Mayor Bloomberg said we can stay here forever? That's great! So I guess they will install showers now... Right? #fingercrossed #newdigs #OWS
14/10/11	03:48	PTRAway ConservativeX faircher The '60s hippies' ended the war the same way #ows will end the plutocracy you're a part of and aren't even aware of
14/10/11	06:42	BronXoo People are predictably missing the underlying point of #OWS. The messengers (hippie'esque) may be miscast, but the message is sound.
14/10/11	07:09	1Spinnellie From the pics I've seen the #OWS don't 'look filthy', they DO look UNITED, & calling them 'losers' isn't going to deter.
14/10/11	08:41	kennethlipp Under the guise of the need for sanitation, you are attempting violate Constitutional protections. How's that working out for you? #OWS
14/10/11	09:13	prenerk I think it's pretty rich that 'sanitation' concerns would trump OWS in a city that pretty much always smells like shit. #justsayin #OWS
15/10/11	12:02	droxz Give me #hippies over the fucks that control this country any day! #OWS
15/10/11	13:31	Nathan_Pensky #OWS cynics are robbed of the typical refrain 'Why don't you hippies get a job?' being answered sincerely 'I'd love to. Know anyone hiring?'

Table 24: A sample of tweets recognising and supporting the 'hippie' label as something positive

A few users argued that the mainstream media were misinforming the public about the degree to which the park was 'filthy', and also backed up the stories of support:

Date	Time	Tweet
10/10/11	16:09	Marihell420 Watching CBS and they are saying we are filthy and do not clean Zuccotti Park at all. OccupyWallSt #OWS #Sep17 #OccupyWallStreet
10/10/11	20:25	BrazilFinance Watching #OWS on Fox News really makes you think it's just a bunch of hippies
14/10/11	00:03	Mruff221 MartianJudge I can only say this to Fox News #Ows is cleaner then most of the parks in NYC. It's simply rubbish this sanitation canard.
15/10/11	11:03	ticketclinicLA Wait, are we smelly hippies OR spoiled brats? MSM make up your mind. Meanwhile we MARCH. #ows
15/10/11	14:09	djgenewolf So how does the corporate media spin a Global #occupy movement as radical leftist hippies? They vilify we #occupy #OWS #tcot OccupyTogether

Table 25: A sample of tweets reacting against MSM calling Zuccotti Park unsanitary

The very fact that 39% of the tweets of this micro-narrative were an effort to support or shelter OWS from the cloak of Twitter abuse made it less gloomy, but hippie culture yet remained one of the biggest micro-narratives of Twitter abuse. As a staggering 61% of the stories highlighted, Zuccotti Park was merely considered to be a hippie utopia where protesters were defined as destructive agents residing on the property. Support on Twitter against abuse, though apparently positive, was profoundly negative in that it

revealed the part of OWS' narrative, which had to always be defended. This constant defence, which the supporters were caught in, changed the *rhetorical force* of the movement's narrative. Indeed, the effectiveness and impact of the OWS narrative on its Twitter audience was constantly interrupted by abusive stories, and could not therefore create a coherent narrative that would influence larger audiences emotionally or cognitively, to support the movement. The same applied to the following micro-narrative, formed through 'rape culture' stories.

6.2.2 The 'rape culture' micro-narrative

Another powerful micro-narrative through which Twitter was used to abuse OWS, focused on the 'rape culture' the movement was supposedly defending, and was based largely on the number of sexual assaults that occurred at Zuccotti Park in late October. Police had indeed arrested on Friday 29th of October 2011, the 26-year-old Tonye Iketubosin, for allegedly groping one 18-year-old protester and raping another 18 year old.[51] Due to these incidents, OWS erected a women-only safe-space tent for women to sleep in while the General Assembly released a statement, on the 4th of November, in which it condemned the attacks and offered support to the victims, stating that:

> OWS exists within a broader culture where sexual assault is egregiously common: someone in the US is sexually assaulted every 2 minutes, most assaults are never reported, and most rapists are never held to account,' the statement reads. 'We are creating and sharing strategies that educate and transform our community into a culture of consent, safety, and well-being. At OWS, these strategies currently include support circles, counselling, consent trainings, safer sleeping spaces, self-defence trainings, community watch, awareness campaigns, and other evolving community-based processes to

[51] Andrew Grossman and Sean Gardiner, November 2011, 'Man arrested in sex assaults at Occupy Wall Sreet', *The Wall Street Journal*, 2 November 2011. <http://blogs.wsj.com/metropolis/2011/11/02/man-arrested-in-sex-assaults-at-occupy-wall-street/> [28 December 2015]

address harm.'[52]

Rapes and sexual assaults were undeniably present at Zuccotti Park and were evidently recognised by the movement soon after the first women came forward. However, the stories regarding rapes, sexual assaults, and the way the movement was dealing with them had started circulating even before the rapes became known. As observed in Figure 20, the 'rape culture' micro-narrative spiked upwards first on the 15th of October, the 19th of October and then again on the 27th of the same month. The biggest spikes though appeared between the 1st-3rd, 6th-7th, and on the 10th of November. The analysis of the above dates has shown that the jump on the 15th of October 2011 was in fact related to the global protests in solidarity with OWS on the day, and especially the protests taking place in London. In an effort to avoid the popular day of the 15th of October — so as to uncover information more relevant to OWS stories — I choose here to focus on the stories tweeted on the 19th of October and the 30th of October to the 3rd of November, in order to trace the smaller stories structuring the Twitter violence narrative.

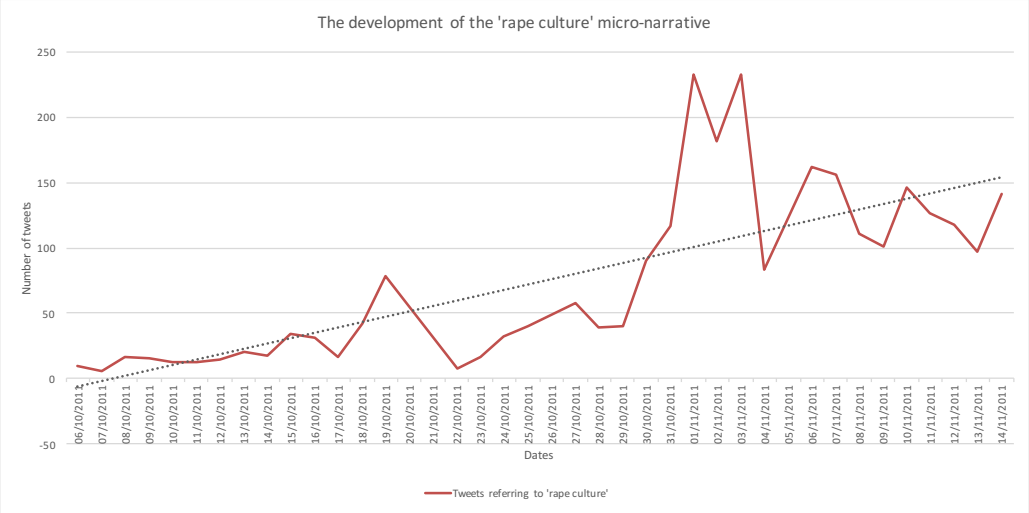

Figure 20: The distribution of the 'rape culture' micro-narrative through the last forty days of the movement

As Figure 20 shows, this micro-narrative grew in an upward linear way, with

[52] See: 'Transforming harm & building safety: Confronting sexual violence at Occupy Wall Street and Beyond' <http://www.nycga.net/group-documents/transforming-harm-building-safety-confronting-sexual-violence-at-occupy-wall-street-beyond-2/> [1 January 2016]

stories increasing swiftly over time. The volume of stories was higher at the beginning of November than at any other stage of the movement's lifetime, and rose sharply just after the rape allegations became known at the beginning of November.[53] The spikes of this micro-narrative appeared on the 27th and 30th of October and again on the 1st and 3rd of November. The late October and early November spikes were chiefly concerned with the incident of the woman who was assaulted in her tent on the 28th of October; and as the analysis of the stories during these 5 days shows, the reactions were critical and aggressive towards the movement as a whole for allowing this to happen. These abusive tweets (n=781) also sustained the idea that the movement's nature was such that rapes were inevitable and expected.

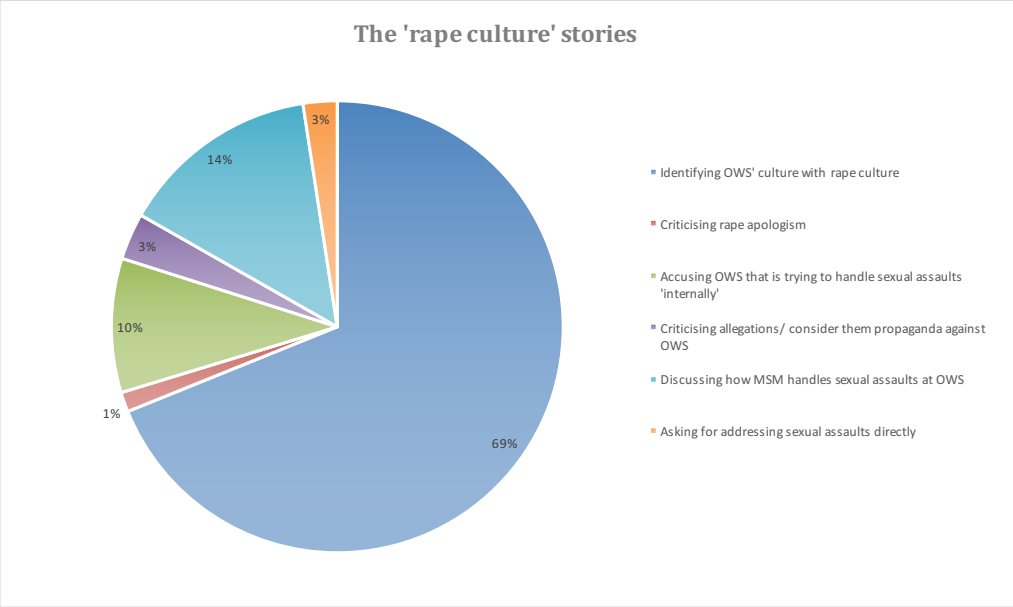

Figure 21: The themes of stories forming the 'rape culture' micro-narrative

Indeed, as Figure 21 illustrates, 10% (n=77) of the abusive stories told in these five days argued that OWS was trying to handle rape allegations internally without involving the police, creating a storyline that blamed OWS organisers for the mishandling of the situation. However, the largest

[53] The 'irregularity' on the figure, appearing on the 19th of October, was due to the fact that on that day Occupy Baltimore was accused of discouraging sexual assault victims from contacting the police. Many aggressors would subsequently use a number of Occupy hashtags to attack the movement and its values.

percentage of the stories—69% (n=538)—was a reaction that equated OWS' culture with rape culture, arguing that OWS was supporting and approving of rapes. 1% of the stories regarding the rape allegations were criticising rape apologists whose argument was that since the occupation was representative of the rest of the world, rapes were inevitably going to happen. This followed the lines of the General Assembly's statement.

Furthermore, stories accusing the mainstream media of not reporting the sexual assaults were the second most popular kind of story, reaching 14% out of 781 tweets during these days. Several twitterers within this micro-narrative criticised MSM for favouring OWS instead of unveiling the truth about it. Conversely, 3% condemned the rape allegations and considered them to be propaganda against OWS. It is impressive to see though that the 'rape culture' micro-narrative did not attract the same amount of support as the 'dirty hippies' micro-narrative. This may be because the stories people tell on Twitter more often than not need to resonate with a broader universe of stories that reflect what others tell. In the commentary pit of Twitter, stories get amplified only if they find resonance. This low response may also be due to the fact that the rapes happened at a late stage in the movement's life, and the narratives of abuse had already been formed around more ideologically-specific events and characteristics of the movement. The rape culture micro-narrative did not have the same resonance as the other Twitter abuse micro-narratives. It was not thematically linked to the ideology of the movement, and that may have made it less popular among the aggressors, who were in the majority male.

Finally, only 2% of the micro-narrative asked for sexual assaults to be addressed directly, which is telling of the primary audience and the attitudes of the users that engaged in this micro-narrative: aggressors with the primary aim of demeaning and stigmatising the movement. Users who called for direct action against wider sexual assault were not necessarily supportive of OWS, but did not have the direct aggressive tone of the 'rape culture' tweets,

as the tweets below show:

Date	Time	Tweet
31/10/11	14:33	xeni scatx if #OWS groups want full participation by women, risk of sexual assault in encampments needs to be directly addressed everywhere.
31/10/11	21:20	AGENDAOFTRUTH I'd like to know where NationalNOW and all the feminist groups are on the rapes and sexual assaults at #OWS protests around the country?!?
01/11/11	11:56	Holyfield6 How many women have to be raped before they shut down #OWS?
01/11/11	12:55	TrentD1 Where is the condemnation of #OWS from left-wing 'pro woman' groups? They're covering up rapes and sexual assaults. #tcot #p2
02/11/11	14:50	JulieLvsPACKERS #OWS has to end!! The rapes and sexual assaults on women is getting worse. Where is NOW on this issue? #OWS organizers r responsible 4 this.

Table 26: A sample of tweets calling for action strategies against sexual assaults

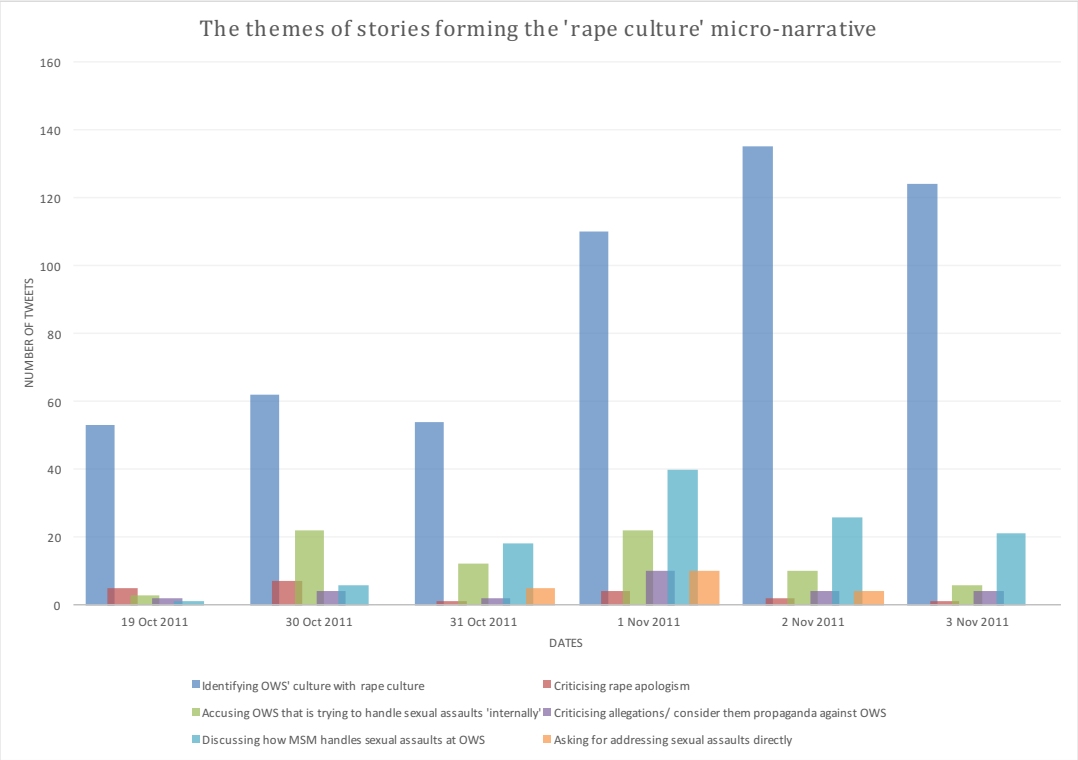

Figure 22: The distribution of stories forming the 'rape culture' micro-narrative during its six more active days

As Figure 22 demonstrates, stories were focused on identifying OWS' culture with rape culture, but even these stories peaked after the 31st of October, following the day a woman was assaulted in her tent. And while the rest of the stories were low on the 19th, on the 30th stories begun to focus on accusing OWS of trying to handle sexual assaults 'internally' and criticising those who took an apologetic stance against rape allegations. One of the

most popular kinds of stories was the discussion of the ways in which the mainstream media handled the reports of sexual assault at OWS, with most of the stories accusing MSM of not giving enough attention to them. Especially on the 1st of November, stories were much more concerned with the style of MSM reporting, than with OWS' handling of the allegations. At the same time, on the 1st of November there was a noticeable rise in stories criticising the allegations as propaganda against OWS. These stories suggested that either allegations were not sound, or asked for immediate action against the assaults. The same applied to the two following days, even though on the 3rd, stories asking for sexual assaults to be addressed were not present. Indeed, there is also a distinct change in the number of tweets engaging with any story other than identifying OWS' culture with rape culture. The analysis shows that as the movement grew older, and as its temporality became more blurred, the 'rape culture' micro-narrative was dominated even more by Twitter abuse. The moderate balance between stories of support and of allegations, which appeared in the 'dirty hippies' micro-narrative, begun to faint. This allows us to reflect on the significance of the stage of the movement and the strength of its support. As the days went by, support of the movement begun to dim down, as the supporters begun to drift away from the movement and as the retention of the stories told in the group grew in numbers and responses. For example, there were stories that tried to draw on logic and to sound more sensible, thus aiming to set the record straight (as shown on Table 27):

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
30/10/11	10:57	babawoowa Wow,have been reading some horrible GOP propaganda about #OWS. Claim there are rapes,assaults,robberies,where there was none at Tea Party.
30/10/11	17:08	CelluloidBlonde Is GOP redefining rape again? Now it only happens if it's at #ows protest w/ no victim, no suspect, & no evidence? #99percent
01/11/11	19:09	badtux99 Anybody have *ACTUAL POLICE REPORTS* of supposed #ows rapes?
01/11/11	22:30	jasoncherkis Now that the sexual assault claim in #occupybaltimore is false, I wonder what other #ows-related crimes are gonna turn out to be bogus
03/11/11	19:22	minds_free They will try everything to discredit #OWS even spreading 'allegations' of sexual assault. Please keep a watch for undercover agents #OWS

Table 27: A sample of tweets trying to set the record straight

These kinds of stories were in direct contrast to the stories criticising rape apologists:

Date	Time	Tweet
19/10/11	13:58	ShelbyKnox Noting Naomi Wolf's rape apologism isn't absolving NYPD for wrongful arrest. But #OWS isn't just suddenly feminist because she got arrested.
19/10/11	16:58	sweetmachineSP Holy shit, I hope the hideous rape-apology trolls descending on Feministe today don't think they're HELPING #OWS. #doingitsososowrong
01/11/11	16:15	Ken_Diesel This woman just justified unreported #ows rapes with a statistic that 1/6 women is sexually assaulted in their life? 0_o #hanity
01/11/11	16:32	FLAENGINEER Just heard grimwomyn on seanhannity! So, rape ok at #Ows 'cause it is prevalent on the US military? #fail
03/11/11	11:04	snarkandboobs David_Brody Mother of one girl. :) Maybe oversensitive because #OWS defenders HAVE tweeted to me 'the rapes aren't *rampant*' as if

Table 28: A sample of tweets criticising rape apologists

Along the same lines, tweets criticising OWS' internal handling of the rapes had a sarcastic tone and openly accused OWS of lawlessness and untrustworthiness:

Date	Time	Tweet
19/10/11	17:27	revmagdalen Gee what a surprise that #Assange-backed #Occupy affinity groups prefer to handle rape allegations internally without involving police. #OWS
30/10/11	08:40	panthersonny So basically, #OWS would rather a rapist be free to rape someone else than to cause too much bad PR for their movement.
30/10/11	12:54	Libertarian52 #OWS organizers, not reporting sexual assault to the police & handling it internally didn't work out 4 the Catholic Church when they did it.
31/10/11	07:00	RiverRoads Any woman raped at #OWS that allows it to be 'handled internally' deserves what she got. You don't want law, then live N the jungle
31/10/11	17:49	HomerWhite They are covering up rapes at #Ows. Handling them internally so as not to offend 'the movement.' Wake up wider awake, America!
01/11/11	09:25	CheshireCat0025 stephenmengland the #OWS solution re victimize the victims by not reporting the rapest who most of the time shows up the next day #fail
01/11/11	18:33	fluchtling Went to #OWS & all I got was a PB&J sandwich, raped, and told to keep my mouth shut. #FAIL #Traitors #Communists #Collective
02/11/11	09:45	nbaynews Why do you have to instruct your followers to not report rape? #ows #msnbc #olberman
02/11/11	21:14	EllieTwits Why are people at #OWS forbidding those who are raped or molested to report the crime to police? Is is because the President supports them?

Table 29: A sample of tweets criticising OWS' internal handling of the rapes

The majority of stories that structured the 'rape culture' micro-narrative identified OWS with rape culture, calling the movement pro-rape, and renaming the movement jokingly as #OccupyRape. They also compared it with other rape allegations that came forward at the time, as Table 30 below shows:

Date	Time	Tweet
19/10/11	02:16	TheTokenBrotha Don't forget, #OWS is pro-rape. #RedEye
19/10/11	10:22	TrentD1 #OWS is just like the Arab Spring. At least in the sense that sexual assault is common. #tcot #p2
19/10/11	10:55	lyndseyfifield LADIES: if you spend the night at #OWS and share a tent with a strange man, sexual assault is a high possibility. #OCCUPYCOMMONSENSE
30/10/11	12:53	jstrevino Let's be clear: when cops tear-gas, chase out Occupy types, they're suppressing America's leading rape culture. I'm okay with that. #OWS
30/10/11	22:06	snarkandboobs Shorter #OWS defenders: 'It's not rape-rape, if it's For A Cause (TM). Keep quiet, pesky broads. We'll let your up twinkles count.'
31/10/11	14:54	AndrewBreitbart So, what do you think about sexual assaults & rape at #Occupy? Specifically in NYC, Toure? Is this your idea of Utopia? thespianjk #OWS
31/10/11	21:54	jonesen1976 #OWS spreading the love one sexual assault at a time. Well love and stds.
01/11/11	00:19	56forfreedom Perhaps with all the sexual assault going on at #Occupy events, they should change their movement to #OccupyRape. #OWS #tcot BarackObama
01/11/11	08:58	mrjc1 There's more sexual assault going on #OWS than whatever Herman Cain is accused of. #Tcot

Table 30: A sample of tweets that compared OWS with other rape allegations of the time

It is also important to note that 16% of this micro-narrative compared OWS with the Tea Party, implying that rapes would never happen during the Tea Party's rallies or demonstrations. These tweets also implied that OWS was not as serious or as political as the Tea Party:

Date	Time	Tweet
19/10/11	08:19	diggrbiii Hey, remember all those accusations / cases of rape and theft at the Tea Parties? Yeah, me neither. #OccupyWallStreet #OWS
19/10/11	15:59	Kaydreein #OWS: Hey, remember all those girls raped at #occupywallstreet? Me neither. #Obama2012 #dems #p2 #topprog #ocra #teaparty #iamthe53 #tcot
30/10/11	17:09	AndrewBreitbart Tea Party is as decentralized as #OWS but has zero problem with filth, violence, insanity, feces, human seed, rape, etc. exchgr
01/11/11	18:48	Pqlyur1 Sure #ows and the Tea Party are the same. It's just that #ows has more rapes, assaults, arrests, drugs and now dead bodies...
02/11/11	10:57	redrivergrl Who do you identify yourself with HildaSolisDOL ? The #teaparty or the #ows protesters where there is drugs, robbery, & rape?
03/11/11	10:03	akgabriel It sickens me how Tea Party people are damaging property, sexually assaulting people, and defying police -- Oh, wait. #OWS

Table 31: A sample of tweets arguing that OWS was not as serious or as political as the Tea Party

This line of argument was not itself new to social movements. It was new, however, to a movement that placed itself within a social media revolution. Social media did not only provide a medium for OWS supporters, but also a medium for its opponents to scorn, abuse, and attack it. Indeed, much of the media and public response to OWS' protests focused on viewing them as a bundle of wrongdoings and lawless acts, exercised by an anarchist mob, which was seen to be made up of uncultivated and uncivilised people. In this regard, Twitter's availability as a tool *for* the movement also became a tool

against the movement. As Jenkins suggested, the opportunities for turning the computer into a 'printing press' has indeed benefitted 'third parties, revolutionaries, reactionaries', but also 'racists alike' (Jenkins, 2006: 221). Indeed, as I argue and have shown up to now in this chapter, the even newer kind of 'printing press', Twitter, has allowed OWS supporters to use online spaces to convey their reactions and counter abuse instantaneously and collectively. However, it has evidently created a strong group of adversaries too.

6.2.3 The 'OWS' anti-Americanism' micro-narrative

The previous sections talked about the 'dirty hippies' and the 'rape culture' micro-narratives that were part of the abuse narrative on Twitter against OWS. I have argued that the stage in which the movement was in, and the importance of the events forming it, influenced and empowered the stories of abuse. I have also argued that the narratives of the mainstream media were picked up by adversaries to verbally attack the movement on Twitter. This section will move into the last micro-narrative forming the narrative of abuse on Twitter, and will draw on the vigour of OWS' opposition, which relied heavily on the ambiguous political nature of the movement.

As most social movement literature proposes, protests emanate from a sense of social dissatisfaction. A social movement is almost by definition the declaration of an objection by people both for and against social change. The prevalence of protests is also a gloomy barometer of the social and political dissatisfaction of the people. A general assumption exists, however, that individuals who are defined as 'anarchists' or 'against the current political system' populate such protest cultures. This eventually dilutes the sentiment of dissatisfaction, and drives individuals to disassociate themselves from the movement, in an attempt to not be assigned with the 'anarchist' label, as a few of my interviewees suggested.

As we have seen from the first two sections of this chapter, the social

objection and social and political dissatisfaction expressed by OWS was disrupted by events and incidents that tarnished the image of the movement, leading to misrepresentation of the protesters as dirty hippies and rape culture aficionados. The stories constructing the Twitter abuse narrative were strong signals of the impending weakening of the movement's social purpose, and were recognised as increasingly frequent expressions of abuse against people who resided in Zuccotti Park and the movement's supporters on Twitter. One more micro-narrative supported these expressions of abuse when reacting to the movement's purpose, until the whole situation boiled over into a tangled macro-narrative of violence. This third micro-narrative, was based on the prominence of the 'political revolutionary culture' of OWS, and appeared in a number of public discourses in both the mainstream media and on social media. Following a strong MSM narrative that saw OWS as anti-American and the protesters as 'socialists, Marxists, and anarchists' who wanted to 'destroy capitalism'[54] a Twitter micro-narrative was formed, downplaying the OWS' association with broader issues of financial crisis and social injustice, and defining the protesters as substantially 'anti-Semitic', 'Nazis', 'communists', 'leftists', and 'anti-American'.

Even within the obviously paradoxical nature of these labels, the micro-narrative of OWS' 'anti-Americanism' (n=2068) started peaking upwards after the 7th of October 2011 when the Communist Party USA,[55] came out in solidarity with OWS, and spiked further, after the 15th of October 2011, when

[54] On the 16th of October, during CNN's Fareed Zakaria GPS, Wall Street Journal columnist and editor Bret Stephens said the Occupy Wall Street protests are "not populism -- this is, maybe, anarchism or something entirely different." <http://mediamatters.org/video/2011/10/16/wsjs-bret-stephens-occupy-wall-street-protests/182727> [2 January 2016]
In his October 14 Washington Times column, Ted Nugent derided the Occupy Wall Street protesters as "useful idiots" and "softheaded numskulls," and claimed that the movement is "nothing more than anti-American socialism on parade."
Ted Nugent, 2011, *The Washington Times,* 'Nugent: Nobody needs Michael Moore's hypocritical advice: Wall Street protesters learning to display a nose for nonsense', 14 October. Available from: < http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/oct/14/nobody-needs-michael-moores-hypocritical-advice/> [27 December 2015]

[55] John Bachtell, 2011, *Communist Party USA*, 'Solidarity with Occupy Wall Street', 7 October. Available from: <http://www.cpusa.org/solidarity-with-occupy-wall-street> [2 January 2016]

the American Nazi Party[56] expressed their support for OWS. More specifically, as we can observe from Figure 23, the first spike in this micro-narrative appeared on the 13th, then on the 15th, 17th, and the 27th of October. The next peak appeared on the 3rd of November, while there was also a low spike on the 5th of November. The Twitter reactions to the 'anti-Americanism' micro-narrative formed a downward linear trend, in which stories adding to the micro-narrative decreased over time. As we can observe the intensity of reactions was higher in the middle of October than in November, when this micro-narrative was on a low scale.

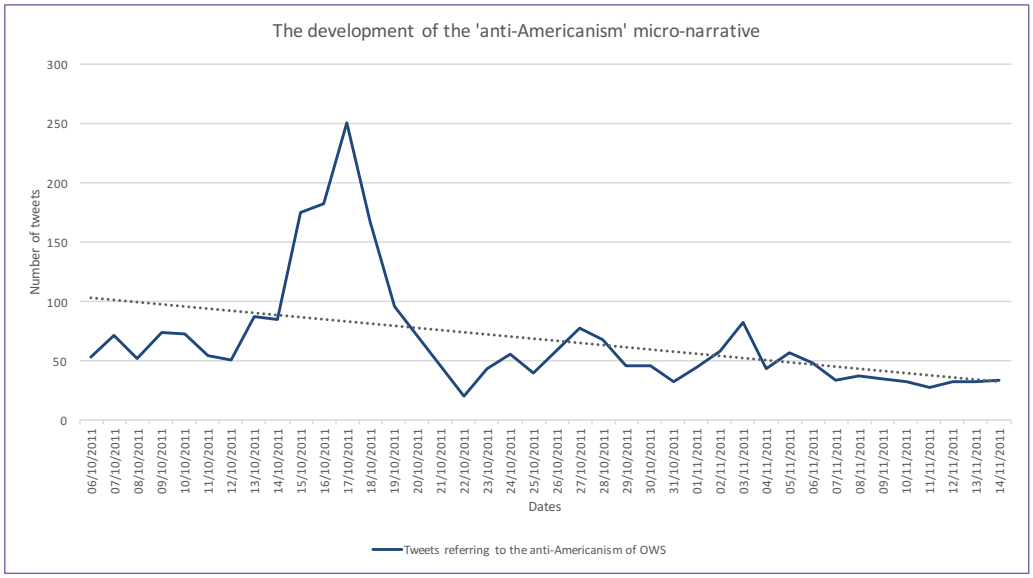

Figure 23: The 'anti-Americanism' micro-narrative through the last forty days of the movement

Analysis of the stories told on these days shows that the 16th and 17th were particularly active because of the 15th of October global protests in support of OWS, which coincided with the American Nazi Party's announcement of support for OWS.[57] A lot of the stories tweeted in this period reacted to Rush

[56] Steve Davenport, *American Nazi Party,* 'ANP Report for October 16, 2011', 16 October. Available from: <http://www.anp14.com/news/archives.php?report_date=2011-10-16> [2 January 2016]

[57] Rocky Suhayda, chairman of the American Nazi Party, argued: 'It has been pointed out to me that many [Occupy Wall Street] protesters are non-white and/or "communists." Well my answer to that is: "Who cares?!" They are against the same evil, corrupted, degenerate capitalist elitists that we are against! ...Seriously people, just who is our enemy? The unemployed left-wing 25-year-old holding up a sign, or the Judeo-capitalist banksters who swindled the American taxpayers out of a trillion dollars in the "bailout" scam and continue to oppress the white working class?!?'. This was almost a

Limbaugh's[58] radio commentary proclaiming that 'the Wall Street protests are full of ignorance, hypocrisy, anti-Semitism'. Many others cited/shared MJ Rosenberg's Al Jazeera article (published on the 16th October, a day after the worldwide protests in support of the movement), titled 'Occupy protest critics exploit anti-Semitism, Panicked conservatives are labelling the Occupy protests as 'anti-Semitic' in an attempt to break up the movement.'[59] Indeed, in an effort to put OWS in a certain political frame, the 'anti-Americanism' micro-narrative gained ground based on the argument that the movement failed to outline specific demands or a clear political inclination.

The swift drop between the 19th and 24th of October, was halted by a spike on the 27th, when hundreds of OWS protesters marched near Union Square in support of a Iraq War veteran and Occupy Oakland protester who went into hospital after being hit by a police-fired projectile. There was also a spike on the 3rd of November after the webpage occupywallst.org published a call to action against austerity.[60] To look closely into this micro-narrative and the stories that structured it, the analysis of this section will focus on the spikes of Twitter activity mentioning the anti-Americanism of OWS on the 16th to 17th of October, the 27th of the same month, and the 3rd of November. The discourse analysis of these days (n=2504) showed that the 'anti-Americanism' micro-narrative can be divided into four kinds of stories: calling the movement anti-Semitic or Nazi; calling the movement communist, or calling the protesters commies; denying the anti-Semitic and commie labels given to OWS, or supporting the movement; and, calling the movement

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populist support, which had no sounding in the movement itself, but was used extensively to discredit the movement.

[58] Transcript of the show is available here: <http://www.rushlimbaugh.com/daily/2011/10/11/the_wall_street_protests_are_full_of_ignorance_hypocrisy_anti_semitism>

[59] MJ Rosenberg, 2011, *Aljazeera.com*, 'Occupy protest critics exploit anti-Semitism: Panicked conservatives are labeling the Occupy protests as 'anti-Semitic' in an attempt to break up the movement.', 16 October. Available from: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/10/2011101510466829989.html> [3 January 2016]

[60] Available here: http://occupywallst.org/article/call-action-november-3rd-solidarity-against-auster/

leftist or Marxist.

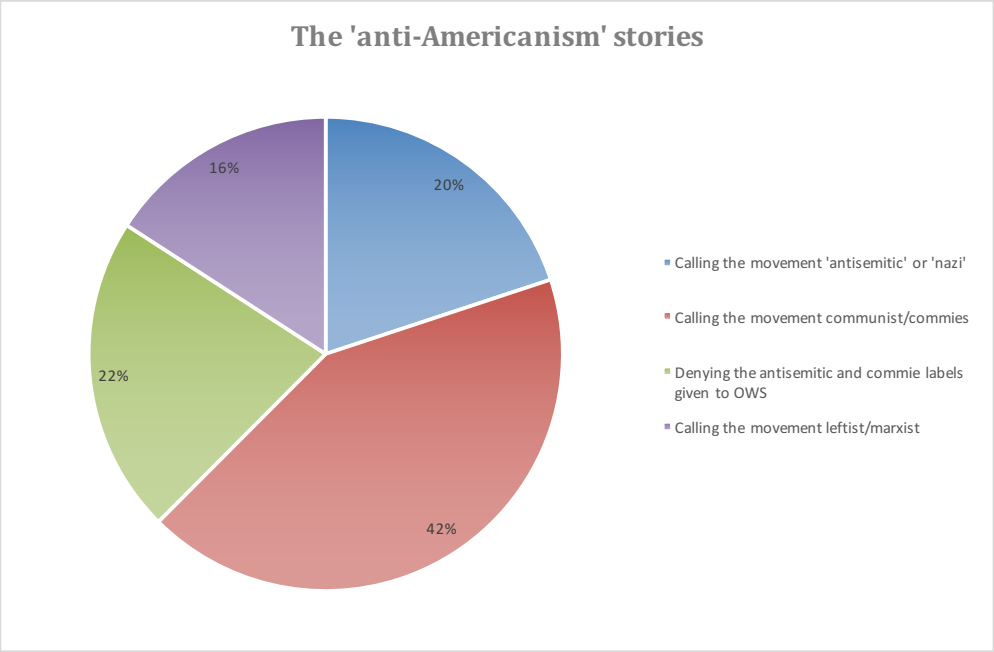


Figure 24: The themes of stories constructing the 'anti-Americanism' micro-narrative

Figure 24 shows how the stories that called OWS communist were prevalent amongst the sample, reaching 42% (n=1051) of all the stories structuring this micro-narrative. This theme of stories existed in contrast with the stories that called the movement 'anti-Semitic' or Nazi, which formed 20% (n=501) of the stories. If we go a step further than discussing these stories as single entities and combine the stories that wrapped OWS in the discourses of the Left - the stories calling OWS and the protesters communist/commies and the leftist/Marxist stories - the percentage of stories defining OWS within a negative sense of the Left ideology reached 58% of this micro-narrative. The 20% that identified the movement as 'anti-Semitic' or Nazi, however, weakened and diluted the leftist notions that governed this micro-narrative, muddied the waters, and entangled the movement in ambiguity.

Drawing from this politically charged micro-narrative, and before moving to discussing the specific kinds of stories anti-Americanism was discussed in, it is

important to note the extent to which ambiguity influenced OWS, so as to unpack some of the meanings of the movement's story. Based on the discourse analysis of 2504 of this micro-narrative's tweets, and from the interviews I conducted, I argue that this ambiguity should not be considered as a negative element of OWS, but as an element that allowed the movement to survive and include a wider spectrum of supporters. I believe that those who have tried to fit OWS into certain stereotypical ideologies have indeed misread the motivations of OWS.

A culture of ambiguity has always been significant to social movements (Polletta, 2006). For Priscilla, for example, OWS was about combining pop culture with the political:

> They think I'm not political enough to work with them [left media], because I cannot quote Marx on the top of my head, and because I just heard of Žižek, like, last year. I am more interested in what is going on in pop culture, because I think that is what connects us with online media. Only if you connect the two, the political and the pop culture, and bring them together, *then* you can do amazing things. It's just that you need to know a little bit about both roles to do that. Because I'm not completely invested in the failures of the Left and I really can't identify with the Right.

For Sam, OWS

> was all about what I was fighting. I was unemployed for over a year, and everything seemed harder for the younger generation, than for the older. And, honestly, I couldn't take all that corruption and crookedness of the government anymore. Occupy was my own way to fight against all this.

Both Sam's and Priscilla's stories contrast directly with Žižek's argument during his visit to Zuccotti Park, where he asserted that 'our basic message'

[OWS] is the question of 'what social organisation can replace capitalism?' This relates to the main argument expressed in his article published in the London Review of Books (2011:11), in which he referred to the London Riots. In this article, he purported that we have entered a 'post-ideological era' in which 'opposition to the system can no longer articulate itself in the form of a realistic alternative, or even as a utopian project, but can only take the shape of a meaningless outburst.' (*ibid*: 11). In spite of the relative value of the post-ideological argument, Žižek may have also misinterpreted what the rising number of social movements around the world was expressly opposing: the unyielding ideologies characterising long-standing polarising political labels and spheres. These kinds of movements were not meaningless. Rather, they were expressions of dissatisfaction with the current system of things. The point that OWS made clear was that it wanted to avoid placing itself in the bounds of the Left, or indeed in any other political party. Protesters such as Priscilla and Sam did not identify with frames that went 'against capitalism', and this political ambiguity was fundamental to the movement's story.

Evidently, the ambiguity of the movement's political character also allowed aggressors to develop this Twitter abuse narrative. This was largely based on the movement's refusal to define itself in terms of a traditional political sphere, which was perceived as a weakness. This is too because a lot of the aggressors sought to frame the movement within traditional binary ideologies, thus overlooking other aspects of the political position of the movement sternly. In this framework, the anti-Americanism micro-narrative rose, which implied that the lack of a political directedness was equal to the lack of freedom (of the polity and of the economy).

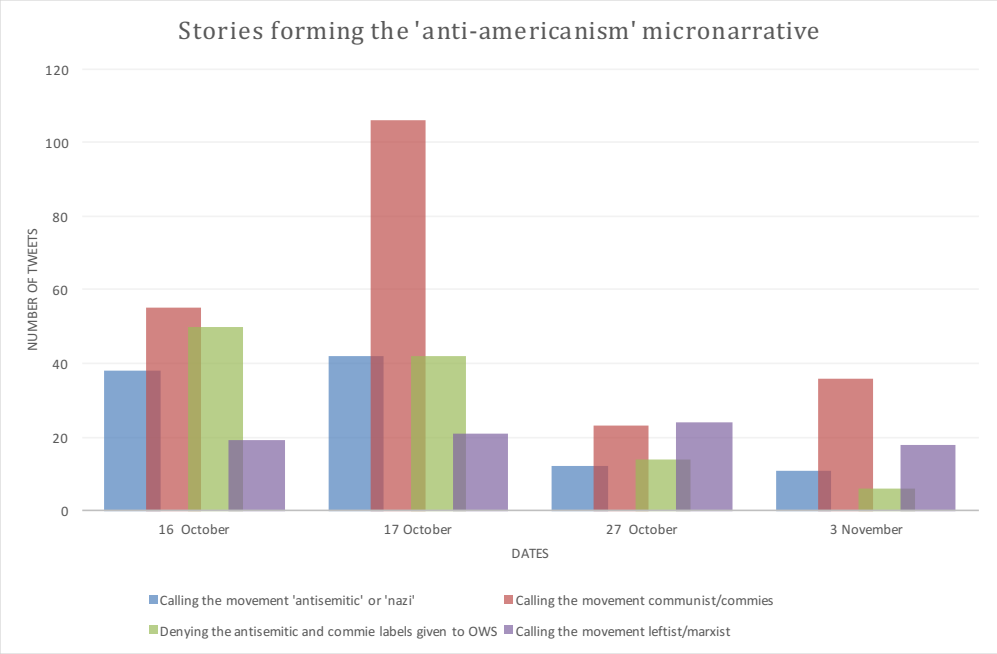


Figure 25: The distribution of stories constructing the 'anti-Americanism' of OWS' micro-narrative during its four more active days

As Figure 25 illustrates, the 16th and 17th of October were driven by stories tweeting about OWS being communist in nature, or OWS as being controlled by 'commies'. The 17th was, however, much more populated with stories that called the movement and the protesters communists than any of the other days. The same kind of stories dominated the rest of the three days, but on the 27th of October, calling the movement and the protesters leftists or Marxists surpassed the 'communist' label, which suggests a turn to more flexible labels that correlated more with the rest of the abusive micro-narratives forming the Twitter abuse narrative. It is also apparent that the 'anti-Semitic' stories fell after the 17th of October, as soon as the hype surrounding Limbaugh's and Rosenberg's articles passed. However, what is interesting to note here is that the sample of tweets denying the labelling of the movement as communist or leftist was not as significant as the sample that denied the anti-Semitic labels. Nonetheless, on the 3rd of November support seemed to be non-existent, suggesting that as the movement developed, twitterers began to stop expressing their support, while abuse was still growing.

This micro-narrative had a lot of contradictory stories to tell, but as the supportive tweets show, and as the discourse analysis demonstrates, this micro-narrative was structured through tweets that attempted to discredit the movement by asserting that the movement was both Nazi and communist at the same time (9.6% of this micro-narrative). It is as if these twitterers' political views and knowledge could not be formed properly, due to the new paradigm of social movements that OWS brought forth:

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
16/10/11	11:29	jaycaruso owillis No. It was stupid as usual. And all #OWS protesters are communists and Nazis
16/10/11	11:44	JeremyCKester Beware to those that support #OWS. Though the cause is ideological, it is a breeding ground for nazi, communist, and other nonfreemarketers.
16/10/11	18:17	YodaJediGeneral The nazis and communist have joined with #OWS ! Since BarackObama supports #OWS, does that mean he supports communism and nazis? #justsayin
17/10/11	07:30	jregan11 #OWS you are known by the company you keep, ie. #naziparty #communistparty
17/10/11	13:24	ScooterSchaefer Nazis, communists, Sean Penn, #ows is landing all of the important endorsements. #Tcot
17/10/11	21:54	optionalg nazis. communist, and socialist parties are supporting #ows movement,,, calling out judeo-capitalists, wow great endorsements #rhe53percent
03/11/11	06:25	DavidBugnon #ows has to lie to the masses to get anyone to support them. Once they find out they're a bunch of communists, nazis & anarchists they run.

Table 32: A sample of tweets defining OWS as both Nazi and communist

Along the same lines, 16% of the stories called the protesters either Marxists or leftists:

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
16/10/11	14:42	TrentD1 #OWS is just a catch-all for general leftist outrage. No common theme except greed and blame of others. #tcot #p2
16/10/11	20:04	DocTHUMP #ows this is getting tied in as a leftist/socialist/anti-capitalism movement which is a great danger, fuck hippies
17/10/11	08:24	RennaW Given what horrible stewarts leftists usually are w/ money, #OWS will prolly blow that $300,000 by noon on organic peanut butter and coffee
17/10/11	09:16	MikeZeeeee Prayer for today: Some of the #OWS #occupy folks wake up & realize they don't want to be cannon fodder for global marxists. #tcot #teaparty
27/10/11	00:55	derekahunter Watching leftists realize no one cares the police are moving them out of parks is like watching a jerk kid learn there's no Santa. #OWS #Fun
27/10/11	13:39	greenrotgut We should throw the wall street executives to the #OWS crowd. We'd left the lefties themselves get rid of Obama's biggest donors
03/11/11	22:35	TheTCOT #ows A violent, insane, misguided, leftist movement. Completely stupid

Table 33: A sample of tweets calling the protesters either Marxists or leftists

Additionally, 2% (n=41) of the tweets that attached 'anti-Semitic' or 'Nazi' labels to OWS, alluded to the infiltration of anti-Semitic and Nazi

sympathisers into the group, as Table 34 below shows:

Date	Time	Tweet
16/10/11	17:41	lizrtello #OWS anti-semitic flavor must worry Israelis given Obama seems to back these hypocrite protesters 100% #tcot #israel
16/10/11	11:21	jambu_Shambu Attention Jews at #ows the american nazi party has officially endorsed what you're doing. Your grandparents must be very proud.
16/10/11	13:08	ConservativeX .SaberGato I know. You'd rather associate yourself w the antisemitic, racist, & violent #ows movement.
27/10/11	02:03	SoSFSam Why am I not hearing an outcry about the antisemitic remarks coming from some members of the OWS movement? #ows
27/10/11	12:17	cobol2 What's more troubling? That #OWS accepts nazis and terrorist sympathizers, or that leftist pundits like KeithOlbermann & MMFlint deny it?
03/11/11	17:04	BardOfEarth And the WALLS came crumblin down, AT Jerico, At Berlin, For the Soviet Union, For the nazis, For Apartheid, WALL STREET You're NEXT! #OWS

Table 34: A sample of tweets defining OWS as anti-Semitic

Still, the largest number of stories within this micro-narrative called OWS a communist movement (42%). What these aggressors aspired to was to attach a frame to OWS, within the discourses and grammars of failed political systems (i.e. Soviet style or extreme communism). Still defining themselves as communist would have been antithetical to the movement's values. OWS should instead be described in the context of politics as 'affective intensity'.

Similarly, equating OWS with communism only exposes the need of its aggressors to frame it within certain power structures:

Date	Time	Tweet
16/10/11	13:25	CoachWalk50 Funny how ppl try and relate #ows to civil rights..#ows is just a bunch of commies, socialist and union rejects wanting to destroy America
16/10/11	15:22	1776in2012 America will never be a communist country. Get used to it #ows #OccupyWallStreet with love #teaparty
16/10/11	20:55	patriotmom61 Clearly the commies, hippies, anarchists, & other members of the motley crew constituting the Occupy mobs are 99% deluded & misguided #OWS
17/10/11	08:42	GenManII Whether the #ows protests were hijacked,or started,by socialists/commies or George Soros they still represent a threat to the Aqmerican way
17/10/11	09:50	SooperMexican #OWS crackhead cop-car-crapping commies have smoked 99% of their brains away.. they truly are the 1% #tcot #p2
17/10/11	15:10	FoxJunkii do you realize that you would be shot dead if you tried to pull off this crap in a communist country? #OWS #occupywallstreet
17/10/11	16:57	4Anno #OWS is where communist, libertarian, unemployed who find time to protest, gather to blame business for the failure of politicians
27/10/11	09:28	mattsquickhit #OWS now attacking FREE SPEECH news outlets.....you folks are puuuuussssiiiies and commies. Dont like different opinions huh? Extremists.
27/10/11	16:52	KuntaJay Fox News just made me yell at my tv. it seems #ows has a & 'stop snitchin rule' and the communists there use Sharia law to govern themselves.
03/11/11	06:29	RealBlackWidow Soooo #ows logo is the communist closed fist. Really? SMH
03/11/11	11:35	DavidBugnon #ows is nothing but a communist thug movement. Their actions so far are costing states & businesses $millions, maybe it's their plan? #tcot

Table 35: A sample of tweets defining OWS as communist

It is also important to note that, 11% of the tweets that called OWS a communist movement, made reference to Obama, calling him a supporter of this 'communist' movement. After Obama's 16th of October announcement of support for the protesters, and the White House's issued statement in which Obama was described as 'working for the interests of the 99%', these tweets become much more palpable (Table 36):

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
16/10/11	14:18	redco2012 Casper42oh You have no clue how #OWS has been orchestrated by Obama and his minions, do u? & co-opted by the anarchists/socialists/marxists
16/10/11	17:41	lizrtello #OWS anti-semitic flavor must worry Israelis given Obama seems to back these hypocrite protesters 100% #tcot #israel
16/10/11	19:51	OBAMA_ATM Crock Obama...supporter of the #ows communist supporting mobs. Could you imagine W doing this..Good Grief...this man and his ilk R marxists
17/10/11	14:05	olive_dog obama endorses communists and nazis now officially part of #ows, racists
17/10/11	17:12	conservativecho Let Obama stand w/ #OWS, let him stand shoulder 2 shoulder w/ the communists, the Nazi party & the like.4 heaven's sake...let him b himself!
03/11/11	08:36	BrianGoettl #OWS has turned America into Greece ahead of BarackObama schedule. Feel bad for the good people who have been duped by the commies

Table 36: A sample of tweets calling Obama a communist or Nazi

What is more, these tweets could be an indication of 'a moment' in the narrative of OWS, in which the president of the United States, a person in authority, adopted rhetorical traits of the OWS narrative, 'to address' the 99% in a language they would understand. This was perhaps a sign of change in the formal political narrative and a sign of things to come. By pointing to genuine concerns and issues that the majority of the US population was truly facing in its acknowledgment of the movement, it can be said that Obama legitimised the movement's cause for social action and empowered its meaning. This moment was strengthened by the stories showing support for OWS against the 'anti-Americanism' micro-narrative, which contributed to the attempt to rationalise the idea of the movement being independent from political parties or individuals. As the tweets in Table 37 reveal:

Date	Time	Tweet
16/10/11	04:04	teh_aimee oh, great. I've seen #OWS called the most anti-semitic movement in America. #notgettingthepoint
16/10/11	08:30	DebbieLuvs romm256 belllindsay #OWS taking action is democratic not socialist or communist & the correlation is only made in US by right wingers
16/10/11	16:02	Dubhuidhe 1st they laugh at U, then they insult you, then they accuse you of being antisemitic, and then you win. #OccupyWallStreet #OWS #cbs #abc
16/10/11	16:55	felixmeister So the anti-#OWS people are now playing the anti-semitic/nazi card, quelle surprise.
16/10/11	21:08	OccupyJudaism If you think #OWS is antisemitic, I challenge you to spend a day in our sukkah in Liberty Plaza. Until then, you speak from your ass.
17/10/11	08:51	vaniaforzudo ant-semitism?nazi?communist together with #ows .why are people trying to mix all of this? i really donB´t understand
17/10/11	13:47	lifepostepic That most portrayals of #OWS as leftist come from right-wing pundits, news outlets & bloggers. It's a manufactured meme meant to discredit.
17/10/11	19:43	tonyprato Speaking of concise messages, will GOP trolls develop one? They can't decide if #ows supporters are commies or fascists.
27/10/11	20:37	JuneStar99 Sorry, trolls, strawman arguments are not valid. Simply imagining #OWS as communists, anarchists, racists, etc. does not make it so. U lose.
03/11/11	07:41	zachaddair When are people going to realize this is not a leftist, communist or marxist movement? It is a democratic movement for everyone! #Ows

Table 37: A sample of tweets supporting OWS against anti-Semitic, Nazi, and communist definitions

This figure points to the argument I made in Chapter 3, about Twitter as the storytelling platform of the OWS narrative and of the basic themes of this thesis. Indeed, it evokes both the heroes and the anti-heroes of OWS and forms a complex story of ups and downs. Even though I recognise that the Twitter abuse narrative's moral outcome may be small in terms of the meaning of contemporary movement cultures in general (and for OWS in particular), this micro-narrative represents largely the realities that OWS had to face on the ground during that period. These on-the-ground vis-a-vis Twitter reactions were sometimes intense and completely monotonous, thus highlighting the fact that Twitter was not exactly the tool of the revolution as so many scholars have argued. Instead, as I assert, it can be seen as a microcosm of what was happening to OWS on the ground. As Clay pointed out during his interview:

> For the younger people coming in there wasn't even really a strategic calculation, it was already as the way they were communicating. It wasn't like 'oh we can use this tool' it was, 'this is how I tell my friends what is going on with me, now I'm participating in this kind of protest and you should join me too.
>
> Clay, 39, professor

These intense reactions created spikes and turns in the narrative and were only rendered visible through the analysis of the micro-narratives. For example, the 'rape culture' micro-narrative only developed after the rapes became a matter of public knowledge. In contrast, when there was no mainstream media coverage about on-the-ground allegations, the narrative was uneventful and quiet. This reaction-process cannot and is not, in the end, considered to be the only process shaping the movement's narratives, but is also dependent upon the strength of its support, the vigour of its opposition, and on key events. I have therefore tried to keep the Twitter abuse narrative from exerting too strong an influence on the structure of the OWS narrative, seeking instead to reflect on the distinctly fleeting character of the relationship of aggressors with OWS on Twitter, and the fragmented, ambiguous, ephemeral, and non-linear forms that facilitated this narrative.

6.3 A new bottle for old wine: abuse on Twitter

Returning back to the argument that I drew on in the introduction to this thesis, I believe that we still lack a comprehensive language and theory to describe, talk about, and analyse movements that do not align with the traditional political notions that have historically been formed to influence social action. Similarly, describing these stories through an analysis of the Twitter abuse narrative, among the other narratives discussed in this thesis, unveils a culture that defines OWS' presence on Twitter only partially. All these comments continued on Twitter for months after the eviction of OWS from Zuccotti Park, and some are still being tweeted during the time of writing, under the same hashtags, and using the same practices to abuse the protesters and the movement.

What these stories reveal, however, is that this platform can make these reactions more visible, but also more tangible. Twitter provides support; it provides an outlet for examining and describing abuse against social movements. Twitter-abuse stories underline how commonplace, how inherent these experiences have become on Twitter and how they change or

influence social movements, such as OWS, during key moments. With this in mind, this chapter offers one more interpretation of the understanding of OWS and its political ambiguity, and provides some insights into the ways in which Twitter was used to attack the movement and the protesters *because* of this ambiguity. The 'anti-Americanism' micro-narrative evolved through and from stories of denouncement and allegations, thereby reinforcing a vicious cycle that contributed to an increasing isolation and demonization of the movement on Twitter. The ambiguous political nature of OWS induced OWS' supporters to focus on telling stories that negated and disproved the accusations levelled against the movement, but did not manage to curtail Twitter abuse. The increasing difficulty of isolating itself as a democratic movement reduced the movement's 'anti-Americanism' micro-narrative to a fragile version of what the movement stood for, and along with the 'dirty hippies' and 'rape culture' micro-narratives, created a sphere of Twitter abuse that eventually helped the public acceptance of the violent eviction of OWS from Zuccotti Park. This took place on the 15th of November, at the hands of the NYPD, which the following chapter will discuss.

The use of Twitter by OWS conveys achievements to be savoured (e.g. the wide support they got), while other narratives stress the failures that need to be overcome (e.g. the rampant abuse on the platform). While some of the narratives created on Twitter may offer a function for OWS' objective successes or failures, or the evaluation of these experiences, the distinctive use of Twitter during OWS may be a precursor of strategies that examine how best to motivate continued commitment to social movements. In the case of OWS, a mix of negative and positive stories provokes the belief that a certain degree of success was possible, and *did* happen, though was not absolute or revolutionary. One may assume that the more homogenous the narratives told on Twitter, the more stories are widely shared. This is made evident through the homogeneity of the abuse narrative, which could be summarised in only three dominant narratives. However, positive narratives, as we will see later, were much more distributed. Though heterogeneous

narratives may not be the solution to contemporary movements that are governed through ambiguity, the goal of social movements is always rhetorical. Action and narratives have the same goal: enticement.

Whether a narrative entices people through aggressiveness, or identification, its goal is to attract as many reactions as possible. Similarly, the goal of social action is to attract as many people, or as many reactions, as possible. Learning from OWS' failings, new social movements should invest in telling more persuasive stories than their opponents, while at the same time directing specific stories to their members to bolster their commitment. These may be achieved by having a more dedicated media team, a more compelling storyline, and a stronger core team.

There is also a lesson to be learned here that links back to the technology characteristic of this movement: as much as techno-savvy a movement is, it will always need a good story and networked support in order to create stories that hold their supporters together instead of estranging them on the platforms they use. As we have seen in the Twitter abuse narrative, a deterioration of support against abuse on Twitter occurred. The following chapter will dig into these kinds of stories: stories in which Twitter supporters were pulled around a positive narrative, *against* violence and *for* supporting the movement.

7. ‘The World is Watching’: Reacting to Police Violence on Twitter

In this chapter, I delve into the ways in which people responded to police violence, by looking into the narrative against police violence on Twitter during the eviction of the movement from Zuccotti Park on the 15th of November 2011. In Chapter 5 I focused on how the negative effects of mainstream media’s misinformation regarding OWS prompted the movement to begin relying vastly on a social media ecology for their representation, thus reacting against the misguided coverage of OWS by the mainstream media. Chapter 6 offered an investigation into the ways in which abuse against OWS on Twitter influenced the narratives of the movement, thus dehumanising and attacking the protesters through descriptions that ranged from the political character of the movement, to the appearance of the protesters themselves. This chapter is different to the first two analytical chapters in a number of ways. Here, I focus on the people’s perceptions of, and reactions against police violence. While this builds upon existing research, its value rests in exhibiting the political dimensions of the narrative, within its communicative context.

The eviction day was a particularly violent event, and I have concentrated on this single day in order to unpack the five dominant micro-narratives constructing the narrative against police violence. These micro-narratives sought to put forward the **First Amendment**, opposed **the use of force**, unveiled the unsuccessful **communication between the authorities and the protesters**, and reacted to the resulting **arrests** from the eviction. This chapter focuses both on the thematic analysis of narratives formed through stories against police violence and the analysis of the narratives in terms of plot and main characters. By examining the development of the micro-narratives forming the narrative against violence through time, what will become more apparent is how specific narratives emerge as larger narratives

as time goes by. Thus, the eviction became the event that defined and called for the end of the movement's existence on the ground, and indeed some characters become central to the narrative's plot.

7.1 Is police violence political?

After the 1960s race riots in the United States, some academics and critics felt compelled to call American society violent, arguing that 'America has had an affinity for collective violence' (Silver, 1968:146). Indeed, since then, the US has had a series of collective violence cases, usually associated with police brutality. Among those were the riots in 1991 in Washington, the 1992 Los Angeles riots, the 2001 Cincinnati riot and the 2003 Benton Harbour riots. To a certain extent, these incidents of civil unrest were situated in historically specific as well as 'local' contexts (Chong, 2014; Goodwin and Jasper, 2014; Morris, 1986).

In 2011, OWS was situated within a new kind of civil unrest movement: one that used tools such as social media and livestreams to deal with and react against, police violence. This movement involved reporting incidents of collective violence, police aggression, as well as police brutality to the wider world, leading thus to wider public investigations and academic debate. Indeed, the case of OWS led to an outbreak of media reports questioning the integrity of police tactics, which opened up the debate about the role of policing public protests in relation to wider policy contexts. This included debates surrounding freedom of speech specifically, and social justice, more generally. Certainly, major unrest incidents during the 1980s and 1990s, or more recently events in Ferguson and Charlotte in the USA (Jackson and Welles, 2015), have given rise to probes and reports emphasising the relationship of race and ethnicity to violent policing. Research and investigations on OWS, however, focus on wider dimensions of social inequality, the role of the financial crisis, and the technological turn of social movements towards the use of social media (Gerbaudo, 2012; Juris, 2012; Penney and Dadas, 2014; Papacharissi, 2015).

Although the events of police brutality connected to OWS bear remarkable similarities to the ways in which police dealt with riots in previous and later years[61], the question of police brutality has tended to be examined only partially in relation to OWS. Academic debate and media coverage about OWS (as I discussed in the previous chapters) has deviated from issues relating to police brutality, and converged on a broader cluster of cultural, economic, and social motifs. What is interesting to put into context for this case, however, is the very definition of 'lawfulness'. 'Lawfulness', was the term that mayor Bloomberg used to address the media, on the night of 15/11/2011, after OWS was evicted from Zuccotti Park. While in the previous chapter I discussed the violence narratives that were *part of OWS*, illustrating how violence was present on Twitter in the form of abuse, in this chapter I will talk about how people on Twitter reacted to violence present *on the ground*, and will argue that these new social media repertoires have afforded Twitter a political role.

The discussion here is based on an analysis of the Twitter micro-narratives that structured the eviction, from the reactions to police's actions, to reporting on Twitter what was happening on the ground. Most importantly, it allows lines to be drawn around the major micro-narratives that developed to characterise both the movement as a whole and the eviction in particular. The idea of analysing Twitter data to trace micro-narratives that tell the story of the movement's last day on the ground may appear simplistic, since it only focuses on a single day. However, the volume of this day's data gives us a minute-by-minute insight into first-hand accounts expressed by a multitude of people, beliefs, and attitudes. What the analysis of this chapter will reveal is that all these micro-narratives, become much more transient when there is a live event or live action taking place on the ground, which is being narrated on Twitter, thus unveiling political leanings. This glimpse into the cultural

[61] Such as marches at Ferguson, organised by the Black Lives Matter activist movement.

function of *narrativising live discourse* on social media, contradicts what Turkle alludes to as a social media impulse lacking sociality, and by extension an engagement with politics (Turkle, 2015). Instead it shows that Twitter is a platform in which not only people narrate their experiences to each other. It is also a platform that can give an element of narrativity to unfolding events and citizen action, affording users authority and significance in an ever-changing environment. As this analysis will demonstrate, in spite of the diversity of voices amidst diverse settings and users, there was a considerable degree to which information and people converged around similar kinds of stories. What those stories are, and why users focused on them during the eviction day, is the focal point of this chapter.

7.2 Telling the Story of the Eviction

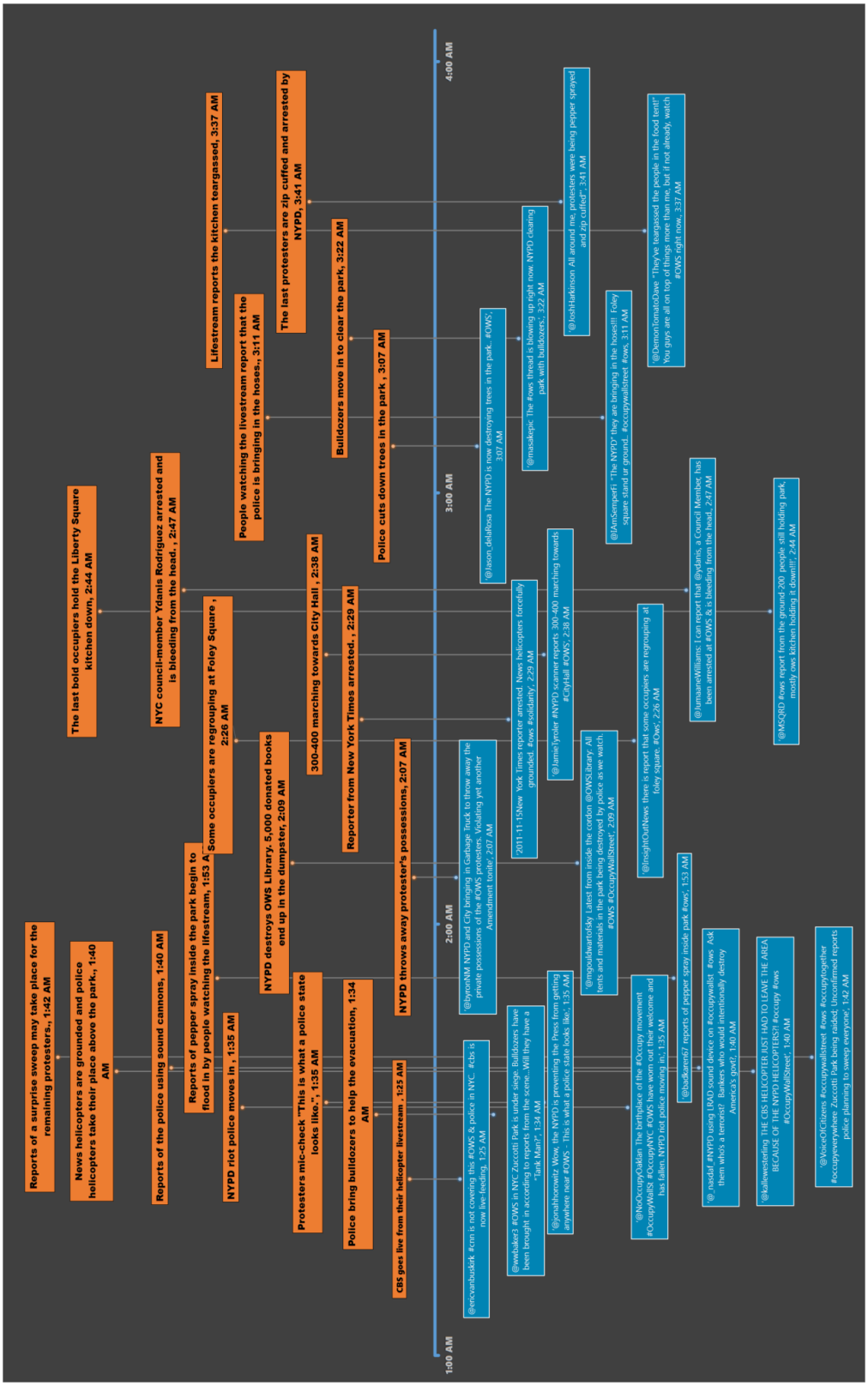
The eviction of OWS from Zuccotti Park, by the NYPD, took place through a number of stages, but it began during the early evening hours of the 14th of November, with police warning the park's vendors about the upcoming disruption of the camp. Reports throughout the afternoon of the 14th of November noticed the apparent simultaneous closing of the vendors' shops next to the park and their immediate departure from the area.[62] Later on that day, police officers gave leaflets with immediate eviction notices to everyone residing in the park, confirming everyone's suspicions of the police's intentions to clean it out. Zuccotti Park was instantly transformed from a free-assembly space into a danger zone for the activists and protesters. In the meantime, NYPD had also started requesting press passes back from the journalists, who were informed of the impending eviction.

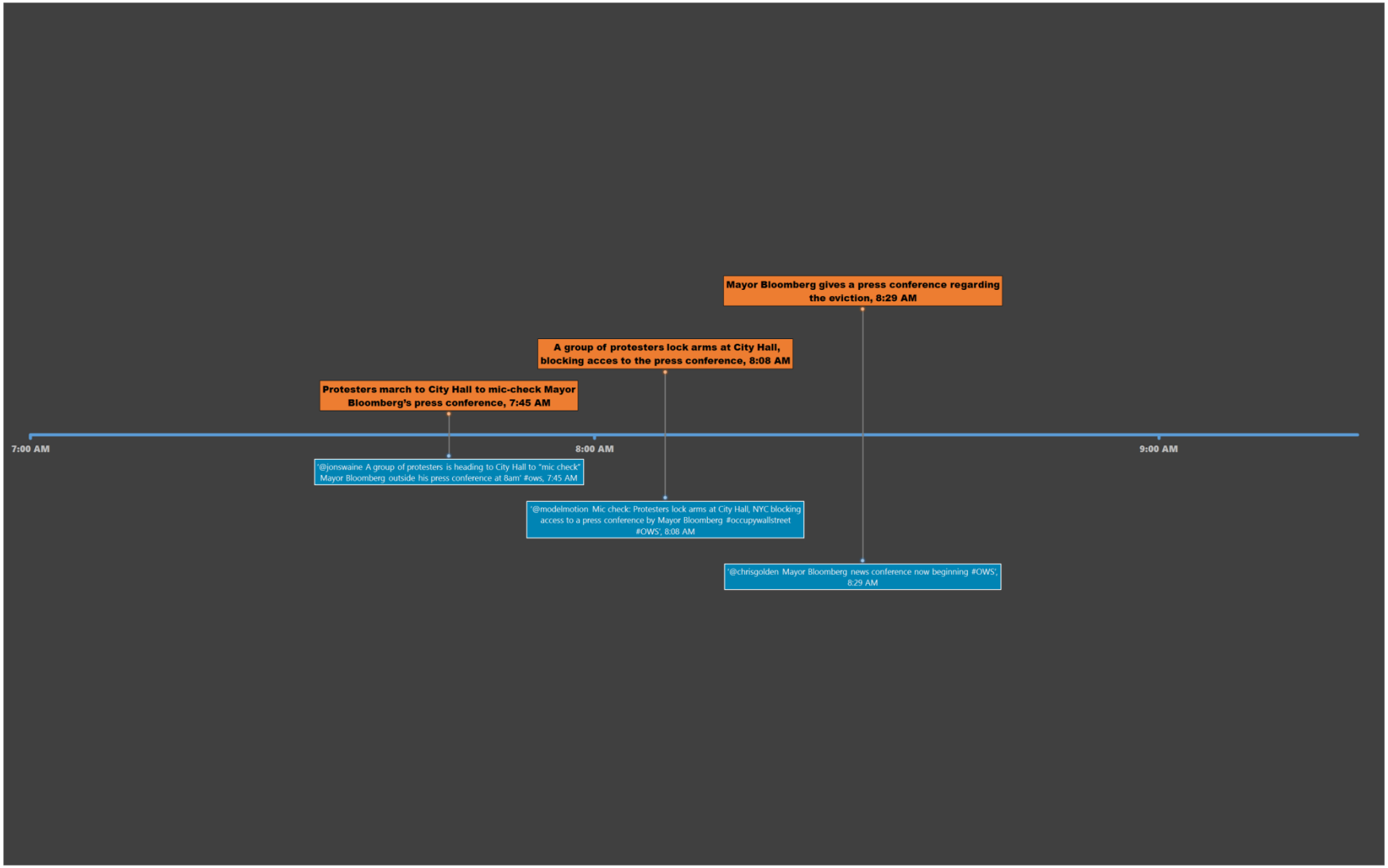
The following timeline (Figure 26) gives a clearer image of how fast the events of the eviction unravelled on Twitter. In order to unpack the police

[62] Democracy Now! 2011. Inside Occupy Wall Street raid: eyewitnesses describe arrests, beatings as police dismantle camp. Democracy Now! [online], 15 November. Available from: http://www.democracynow.org/2011/11/15/inside_occupy_wall_street_raid_eyewitnesses [Accessed 29 Mar 2012].

violence narrative dominating the eviction day, in the following sections, I will analyse some of these moments more closely:

Figure 26: Timeline of the first hours of the Eviction day




Mayor Bloomberg gives a press conference regarding the eviction, 8:29 AM
A group of protesters lock arms at City Hall, blocking acces to the press conference, 8:08 AM
Protesters march to City Hall to mic-check Mayor Bloomberg's press conference, 7:45 AM
7:00 AM
8:00 AM
9:00 AM
'@jonswaine A group of protesters is heading to City Hall to "mic check" Mayor Bloomberg outside his press conference at 8am' #ows, 7:45 AM
'@modelmotion Mic check: Protesters lock arms at City Hall, NYC blocking access to a press conference by Mayor Bloomberg #occupywallstreet #OWS', 8:08 AM
'@chrisgolden Mayor Bloomberg news conference now beginning #OWS', 8:29 AM

Surprisingly, given the unexpected and swift police action, the night and day of the eviction formed one of the most actively tweeted days of the movement, with a significant amount of tweets coming from OWS supporters, on-the-ground activists, and journalists. Even in such a heightened context, Twitter worked as a handy and easily accessible tool used to circulate information, with strategies in place for maximum amplification of the message. 76,683 tweets (including retweets, links, photos, and videos) were tweeted on the 15th of November under the #OWS hashtag. As we saw in the previous chapter, violent events exerted too strong an influence on the structure of the OWS story, mirroring the markedly ongoing ephemeral role of Twitter as a mediating tool in the relationship between OWS' supporters and the movement, and the fragmented, vague, flitting, and open-ended stories that facilitated their processes. Likewise, the eviction day was nothing but a swarm of micro-narratives, a swirling system of 'important' moments, opinions, and events that several thousands of protesters, online and on the ground, devoted themselves to building up and spreading with fervour. One thing that made this day different from the rest was the amount of tweets tweeted on a single day, which compared to some of the other popular days under investigation (e.g. the 15th of October) had more than double the level of activity. This fact is illustrated in Figure 27 below:

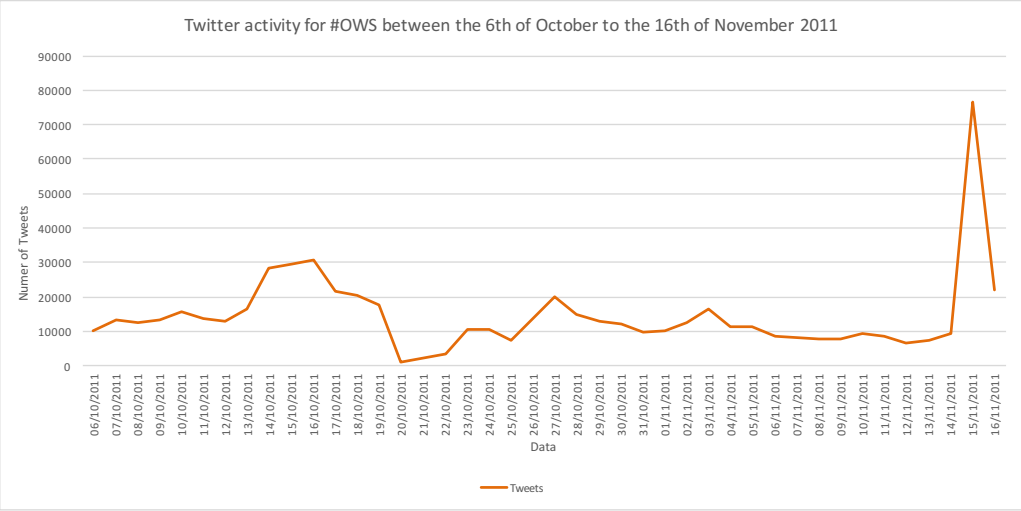


Figure 27: Twitter activity between the 6th of October to the 16th of November 2011 for the tweets under the #OWS hashtag

On the 15th of November, 20,411 OP tweets were tweeted by 11,704 unique users, at the rate of more than 6,5 tweets per user. 8,458 of those users tweeted just once, while only 1,530 tweeted more than two times. Twitter was widely used for engaging in discussions too, since 6,712 tweets begin or include mentions, forming the 8% (n=1632) of the total number of the day's OP tweets. These mentions were mostly directed towards the NYPD, other authorities, or were thanking or applauding people's response to the eviction. The data shows that there were no replies from the NYPD and the authorities, illustrating how the discussion was a one-way exchange conversation from the side of the users.

However, what is evident in the tweets of the 15th of November is that the users had a tendency to add to specific micro-narratives, similar to previous micro-narratives we have looked into, such as the ones reacting to the injustices or calling for fairness. Some micro-narratives were confined in a small timeframe, while others were spread and discussed throughout the day, flaring brighter in specific moments. As better viewed in Figure 28, ephemerality here was intense and condensed, with spikes going out multiple times during the day. However, the majority of tweets occurred during the first five hours of the day. Big spikes show how ephemerality can move within a spectrum. Evidently, ephemerality becomes much more intensified when there is an urgent event taking place, which demands action. Even though it was present later in the day with some intensity, that intensity was much more moderate. In what follows, I will look into the dominant micro-narratives of the day, which informed and made visible the smaller flickering moments of the day. It was these micro-narratives that played a big part in shaping the image of the movement as an ongoing expression of dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in the USA. Indeed, as I have suggested in the previous chapter, this day was not the end of the movement, but rather a new beginning for individuals and groups that used SMNs to tell their stories of dissatisfaction.

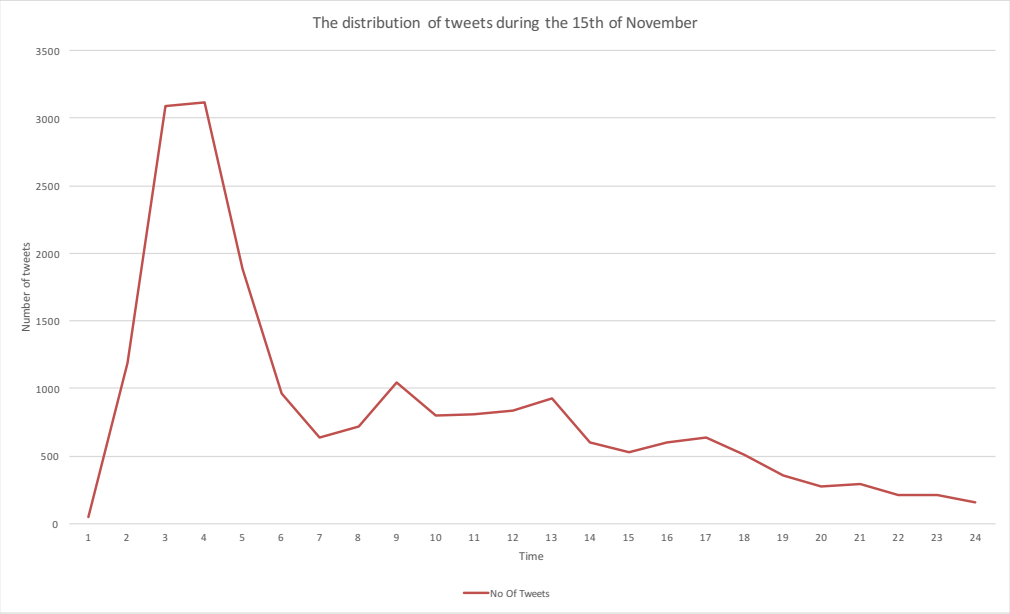


Figure 28: The distribution of tweets during the eviction day on the 15th of November 2011

7.3 The making of the police violence narrative

As Figure 28 above further illustrates, most of the OP tweets were tweeted between the hours of 1am-4am, with later spikes appearing at 8am and 12pm. By 5pm, activity fell to half of what it was at 1am, and by 9pm tweets tweeting under the #OWS hashtag were in the low 200s. Twitter's ephemeral communication became more noticeable at these particular points, because there were far more tweets coming and going in during the eviction, forming an event as a fleeting moment in time. The decline of Twitter activity just after the eviction took place, shows not only the ephemeral character of the stories mediated through the platform, but also how ephemerality continued to characterise how the story unfolded throughout the day. It is hence more interesting to look at what kinds of stories users told on Twitter during the eviction and in its immediate aftermath.

As discussed in previous chapters, for most twitterers, Twitter was the way to react to what was happening. When mainstream media spread misinformation about OWS or misrepresented the protesters, users took to Twitter to react against and reject misinformation and mainstream media

spins against them. These reactions were not particularly participatory in nature. They usually took place after the event had happened, the article was published, or the tweet was sent. In contrast, in the case of the eviction, the majority of tweets were sent as the events were unravelling, thus forming instantaneous stories. It would therefore be more practical to talk about this move as a turn from engagement to participation. In Dahlgren's (2009: 80) words:

> Engagement refers to subjective states, that is, a mobilised, focused attention on some object. It is in a sense a prerequisite for participation […]. For engagement to become embodied as participation and therefore give rise to civic agency there must be some connection to practical, do-able activities, where citizens can feel empowered.

By forming a reactionary narrative about police violence on Twitter during the eviction, users formed a different kind of civic act that resembled what Lance Bennett (2008a) calls the death of the 'the obedient citizen'. In this way, they gave a place to shared actions, which in this case aimed to be subversive towards the police's actions. The eviction in this respect became a shared experience, in which the will to help and denounce the actions of the NYPD and the municipal authorities created a meaningful experience for twitterers; not by just augmenting their participation in the movement, but by also enhancing their sense of contributing to a political action. The community of OWS became much more obvious, in the need to demonstrate an emotional connection with protesters on the ground and strong connections to their imagined community (Anderson, 1991). The interaction between distant users' relentless pleas for first-hand accounts about the night, and the on-the-ground protesters' rolling livestream commentary on events unfolding during the night, underlines the affordance of Twitter as a springboard for civic participation and political action.

This shift, from engagement to participation, demands a rethinking of the meaning of civic action as political action. This re-thinking extends 'more mainstream' expressions of civic rights (e.g. voting in an election) and takes into account notions of political participation expressed or contested in wider social and cultural contexts. This has long been argued for since the 1970s, with the rise of second wave of feminism, the fight for LGBT+ rights, and creative citizenship (Hargreaves and Hartley, 2016), which put forward sociocultural accounts of political participation. In what follows, I show how events structuring the eviction day can expose the ways in which Twitter's social space can both preserve sociability, but also, create communities with shared political ideas that are articulated through micro-narratives of civic expression. I first discuss the micro-narrative of honouring the first amendment, before moving into discussing the use of force, the unsuccessful communication between the authorities and the protesters, and the arrests.

7.3.1 Honouring the First Amendment

In Chapter 4, I talked about the extent to which Twitter's use as a broadcasting commentary agent for livestreams during the evictions cultivated a sense of ephemerality, while at the same time giving the activists and their supporters the sense that they could outpace TV reports and traditional means of protest-broadcasting. I argued that through this kind of broadcasting; a livestream commentary pit gave the livestreamed protest a similar platform of distant participation to live events and pervasive connectivity. Moving further than the frames of the livestream as a media ecology game-changer, in this section I will look into the ways in which that same livestream commentary on Twitter served as a participatory political tool, which formed the core of the 'honouring the First Amendment' micro-narrative. Users accessed the livestreams in order to secure their freedom of speech, their right to peacefully assemble, and to bypass the bar of the mainstream media by the police, thus securing their freedom from the press by covering the eviction themselves, and broadcasting it through livestreams. There were 1624 OP tweets mentioning the livestream on the day of the

eviction, which formed almost 8% of the whole day's OP tweets (n=20 411). These formed one of the strongest micro-narratives against police violence during the eviction.

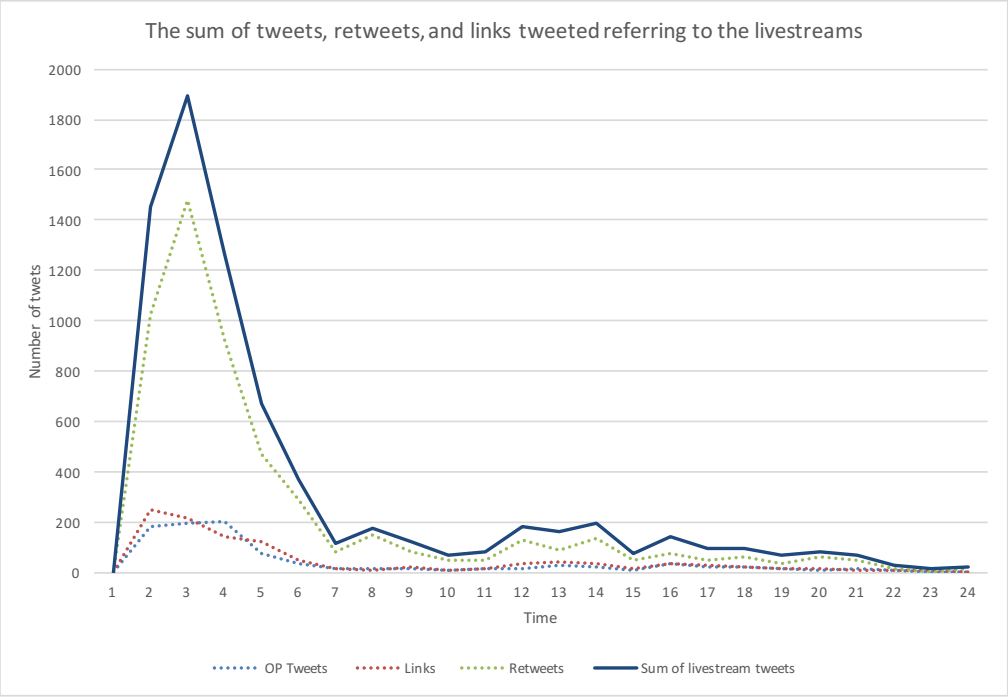


Figure 29: The distribution of the sum of tweets, retweets, and links tweeted, during the eviction day, referring to the livestreams

In Figure 29, we can observe that the peak of the livestream tweets took place during the police action at the park, while the police were evacuating the protesters. There was also a small rise at 8pm, during which Mayor Bloomberg held a press conference, and then several other rises during the day livestreaming marches in support of OWS and against the eviction. At the same time, the graph shows how the retweets and tweets rose exponentially during the eviction (including photos, videos and links). Similar to the OP tweets, the other two kinds of tweets rose between the first hours of the day. However, as more photos (of the police entering the park) and links (mostly of livestreams) emerged, the tweets between 2am and 3am acted as an immediate response to the abrupt eviction. Stories focused on how people could get information and witness-accounts, describing what was happening on the ground, offering advice, or support:

Date	Time	Tweet
15/11/2011	01:09	JovannaMcCoy I just heard “If you refuse to leave the park you will be subject to arrest” on the livestream. It's 1am, LET THE DAMN OCCUPIERS SLEEP. #OWS
15/11/2011	01:20	JanetRWeil Livestream from #ows just went black. I'm scared for the occupiers. Spread the word - they are protected IF we watch and care!
15/11/2011	01:21	ericverlo via livestream #OccupyWallStreet NYPD raid imminent. Who'd have thought nightly #OWS occupies would so soon resemble embattled insurgencies?
15/11/2011	01:25	shaygabriel “This is the greatest moment of our fucking lives!” on the livestream #OWS
15/11/2011	01:45	alexjon Watching cops go after the livestreamers at #ows -- very intentional.
15/11/2011	02:03	mayanoko Tried getting onto the livestream from my phone but it's choppy and cuts out. Heading into a lesson so I can't keep up.. stay safe #ows!
15/11/2011	02:06	creativecstasy Via Livestream, I'm watching NYPD literally pick up tents and throw them into an apparent trash heap. #OWS Sanitation trucks on scene.
15/11/2011	02:28	danacutts #ows livestream: police & sanitation workers creating a giant pile of people's belongings, stuff they weren't able to retrieve before raid.
15/11/2011	03:08	RighteousMeli This livestream of the NYPD raiding the #OWS camps is so intense. Why wouldn't they do it during the day though? Cowardice?
15/11/2011	03:22	ptmcniff The #ows livestream is crazy right now. Another column of cops moving in. Tensions growing. This will not end well.

Table 38: A sample of tweets in which users describe what they are watching on the livestreams

A different but similar kind of story played a major role in supporting the First amendment micro-narrative, thus spurring the feeling of ‘togetherness’ within the Twitter community, and showing how users were acting against the injustices of the police. Those were the stories of ‘The whole world is watching’. Used both as a hashtag and a chant in the park, the phrase voiced the activists’ convictions that even within the ban that prohibited them from broadcasting the eviction, livestreams and Twitter still worked as their information spaces. This allowed them to feel like they participated in the on-going events, underlining how despite the use of Twitter as their socialising space, Twitter was still an everyday and reasonably political space.

There were 1,624 OP tweets mentioning ‘the world is watching’ chant during the eviction day, which formed 4.5% of the total OP tweets. In Figure 30, we can observe how the slogan picked up at 3am, at which point the police moved into the park with hoses and bulldozers. The kitchen was reportedly being teargassed, and the last protesters were zip-cuffed and arrested.

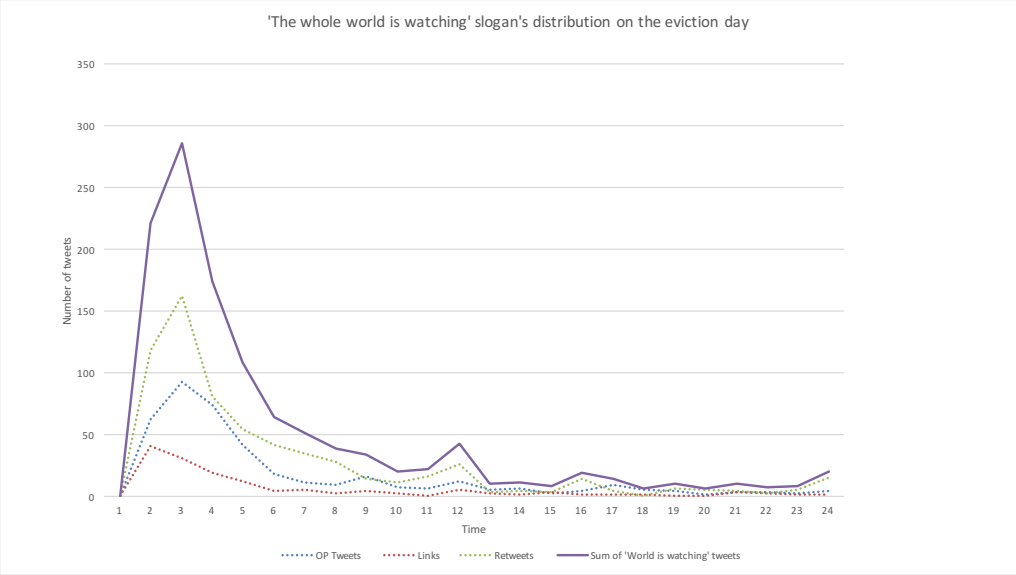


Figure 30: : The distribution of the sum of tweets, retweets, and links tweeted, during the eviction day, including the chant 'The world is watching'

The chant 'the world is watching' was a direct call against police brutality, but also worked as a pacifier for the people who believed that if the protest was livestreamed, then the police would not move into the eviction, or engage in arrests or direct violence. It was, however, mostly a shaming mechanism against the NYPD, which accused them of bridging the First Amendment:

Date	Time	Tweet
15/11/2011	01:09	CAMTHEDESTROYER Stay safe & stay peaceful, NYC. #thewholeworldiswatching #ows
15/11/2011	01:17	divebunny13 The whole world is watching. #ows Stand strong, Occupiers!
15/11/2011	01:46	theriotisover Occupiers preparing fr civil disobedience, linking arms "Mic check, we are at 12,000 viewrs on livestream, the whole world is watching" #ows
15/11/2011	01:57	davidkozin Got out of bed to watch live stream of #ows being raided at 2:00 AM. Currently 17,000 viewers inc. 300/min #occupy #THEWHOLEWORLDISWATCHING
15/11/2011	02:13	SigHafstrom Stay strong, positive, and peaceful, #OccupyWallStreet! The world is watching, and we are with you! #OWS
15/11/2011	02:21	celiaalario sending cyber hugs to live stream video teams at #ows #occupy - YOU are changing the world with your cameras!
15/11/2011	03:07	cinnamaldehyde #thewholeworldiswatching NYPD. What are you thinking? Trying to be catalysts? Who are you protecting? You're proving our point. #ows #oo
15/11/2011	03:21	fauxpinky I would sincerely like to thank the #NYPD for making #OWS movement stronger tonight. We've already won, the world is watching! #countdownKO
15/11/2011	03:52	gavin_bonnar #Occupy #ows #OccupyDameStreet The world is watching, America. Bloomberg. Obama. Go to OWS livestream 2 see the police state. This is NOT gd
15/11/2011	04:56	random_flail #nypd youre fighting for the wrong side, you are the 99% too. STOP treating peaceful occupiers like a threat. the world is watching. #Ows

Table 39: A sample of tweets using the slogan 'the whole world is watching' or similar phrase

Outrage against the police grew as the events unfolded and the police began

disrupting what the protesters considered their legal and civic rights. A lot of the supporters begun to wonder whether they were living in a police state, comparing the police violence they were enduring with the ones citizens during the Arab Spring had to go through. This theme of stories was structured around 503 OP tweets, which attacked the US authorities and the NYPD, describing them as dictators and comparing them with authoritarian regimes in Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Bahrain. These tweets thus further accused the NYPD of overstepping their First Amendment rights, as shown in Table 40:

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
15/11/2011	02:46	rockrichard Comparing #OWS to Egypt always seemed a little ridiculous. Then NYPD barred press, shut down air space and deactivated cell towers.
15/11/2011	01:42	nettsj shut off wifi and cell at #ows proir to police raid? what is this syria? why aren't the cable “news” networks covering?
15/11/2011	01:49	owen_mas Is it crazy that I expect to see live tv coverage of things goin on in NY(that I heard about hrs ago) Didnt we see tahrir square live? #OWS
15/11/2011	02:17	brokenhours There was better press access to civil unrest in Egypt and Libya than to tonight's police raid in NYC. #occupywallstreet #ows #sleepwalking
15/11/2011	02:33	LibertyBelle4 Every American had better take the interference w/press coverage of events at #ows very, very seriously. THAT is tyranny, friends. Look out.
15/11/2011	02:44	iiamelii What kind of message does this send to dictators like Saleh and Asad? That in the cover of darkness they can crush dissent & bar media? #Ows
15/11/2011	03:10	pocketfulofgeek All this #OWS stuff with the NYPD blocking the press etc is remarkably similar to how I remember Egypt's revolution starting.
15/11/2011	03:29	kerrence when Mubarak does it, it's oppressing the people. when the US does it, they're “quelling a riot.” #Ows
15/11/2011	03:34	cadfile Bahrain also prevented the media from covering the violent removal of protesters. Glad NYC picked up some pointers #bloombergfail #ows
15/11/2011	04:02	markhughes Zuccoti park is not Tahrir Square. Western media covered Tahrir Square live, minute by minute for weeks and weeks #OWS #Occupy Shameful.
15/11/2011	05:29	ph1x The reporters are NOT allowed into Zucotti Park to cover the news, which means the US is now Syria, Yemen, Bahrain... #ows #fb

Table 40: A sample of tweets comparing the USA with authoritarian regimes

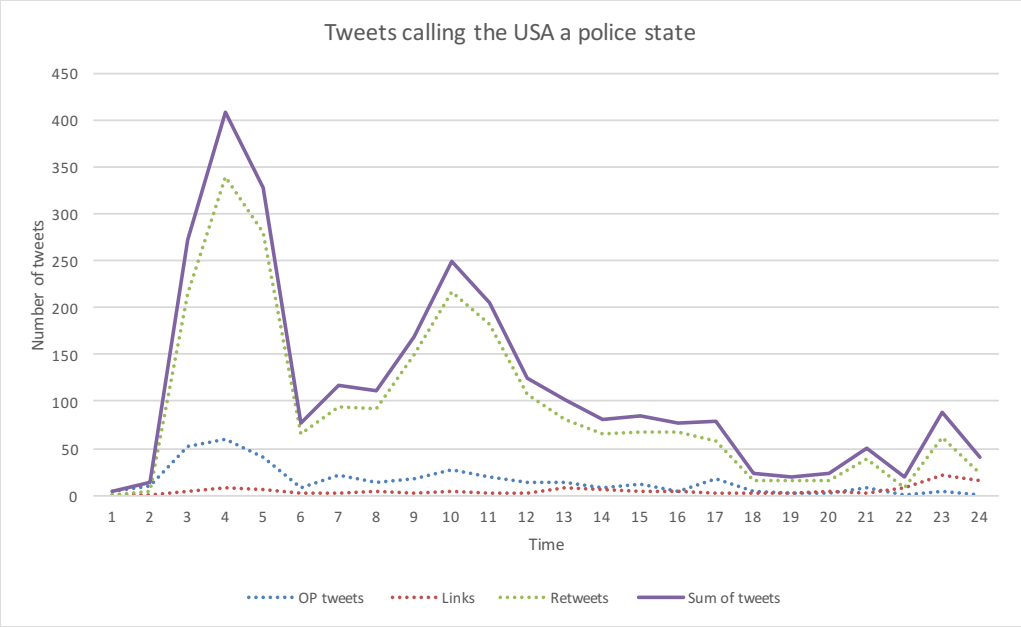


Figure 31: The distribution of tweets calling the USA state and the NYPD a police state and comparing it with authoritarian regimes

As Figure 31 illustrates, tweets, tweets with photos, links, and videos, and retweets, reported on the unfairness of allowing the NYPD to blatantly take over the park during the hours of 3am to 4am. However, what becomes more interesting to note here is how the tweets, including photos, videos, and links to these claims are almost non-existent , thus suggesting that there were no photos, videos, external articles, journalistic pieces, or blogs referring to these claims during the eviction. The built-up outrage on Twitter was both instantaneous and intense, but it was formed through other themes of stories, when it came to including extra material for supporting their argument, like photos, links, and videos. The intensity of the 'police state' stories was rather evident in the ways in which supporters described the police's actions as part of a US political context that was not representative of the democratic political system of the country.

The parallels drawn with Egypt become more relevant here if we consider that there are some commonalities between OWS and the 'Arab Spring'. The memories of the revolution taking place in the Arab world influenced a lot of OWS' supporters and gave them reasons to compare what was happening in

New York with what had happened in Egypt and Tahrir Square a few months earlier. It is important, however, to stress that what created the narrative here was not just the fact that the press was not allowed access to the police's doings, but also the fact that the police clearly and blatantly violated the First Amendment, a law which the USA are proud to hold as their constitution's foundation. A number of tweets (n=270) went further to explicitly call the police out regarding the infringement of the First Amendment (the freedom of speech, the freedom of the press, and the right to peacefully assemble):

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
15/11/2011	01:41	baysocialist Barricading the media is a blatant violation of the 1st amendment. Good old American "democracy". #OWS
15/11/2011	01:57	blogdiva IN CLEAR VIOLATION OF THE 1st AMENDMENT the NYPD are denying press access to Zucotti Pk / #OWS Liberty Plaza EVEN WITH PRESS IDs
15/11/2011	02:16	OsmanSolo The #NYPD isn't allowing the media to pass and record what they're seeing. This is totally unlawful and against the 1st amendment #ows
15/11/2011	02:43	chrisduncan I was pretty ambivalent about #OWS. But if I have to choose between the First Amendment & whatever the NYPD is doing... it's an easy choice.
15/11/2011	03:26	BradKimberly So, let me get this straight. 1st Amendment guarantees freedom of press and assembly, but NYPD forgot this? #ows wilw OccupyWallSt
15/11/2011	04:26	K82 if you're doing nothing wrong why ban press coverage. Thanks for stifling the first amendment, assholes. #Ows
15/11/2011	07:50	AshBaxNYC Bridges shut down, subways shut down, the press is shut down, freedom is shut down, first amendment rights are shut down.... (#OWS)

Table 41: A sample of tweets calling for the violation of the First Amendment to the US constitution

We can consider some of these discursive acts as mere expressions of civic acts, with a deep political meaning: first, politics as standing against unfairness, and second, politics focused on specific targets, thus circumventing the enforced blackout by the police, and the eviction itself. These two aspects echo one's eagerness to participate in ongoing events, albeit at a distance, whilst pointing out the unjust revoking of a constitutional right. The following stories thus prevail:

1) Challenging the violation of the First Amendment;
2) Equating the American democracy with authoritarian regimes;
3) 'The world is watching' micro-narrative as the way of calling out the futility of NYPD's blocking of the press; and
4) Livestreaming as the means of documenting and live-commenting

against police brutality.

These themes of stories formed the 'Honouring the First Amendment' micro-narrative, against police brutality. Now I will go on to discuss the stories forming the 'use of force' micro-narrative, as one that was strongly present during the eviction day.

7.3.2 Use of force

Considering their disillusionment with the government and the authorities in general (including the NYPD and Mayor Bloomberg), the anger OWS-supporting twitterers expressed against police brutality comes as no surprise. In these new spaces of civic cultures, we can see new repertoires of social participation evolving. The 'use of force' micro-narrative was thus formed through particular stories that began as soon as the event took place, and kept influencing the narrative of the eviction day and of police violence for hours to come. In this case, we will look into the following kinds of stories:

1. The destruction of the OWS Library by the NYPD;
2. The alleged teargassing of the last protesters who remained onsite;
3. The cutting down of the trees by the police; and
4. The arrest and police-inflicted injury of the council-member Ydanis Rodríguez.

Turning to the first of these stories, the destruction of a core element of the community, the library, sparked huge outrage on Twitter. This story highlights that what a community sees as its political stance, authorities and the state may declare as a threat. The library consisted of 5,000 books, all donated to the protesters by supporters. The emotional and community links of the OWS with their library were strong, as Claire would later tell me during our interview:

> They came in [the NYPD] and made us all leave the park. We didn't even have time to pick up our personal

> belongings. We just left. I wanted to get out before things got ugly. But you know what angered me most? Not just me, all of us. They came in [the NYPD] and threw all the books we had in The People's library, which so many good people brought to us, to borrow them ourselves or give them to people. And they threw all of them in a dumpster. It broke our hearts.

Recognizing the library as a core communal asset for the group, one would assume, would require the police (or the municipal authority) to have a more culturally modulated, nuanced, understanding of OWS. However, in the instance of the OWS' evacuation, the police threw all the books from the library in the dumpster, as a method of dismantling the camp. Following public outrage, it was later revealed that the books were transferred to the sanitation department warehouse and could be reclaimed. 335 OP tweets made specific reference to the library's destruction (Table 42):

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
15/11/2011	02:10	jujueyeball nypd destroying OWSLibrary, blocking press, pepper spray and batons used. this is 7 kinds of fucked up. #ows 212-334-0611 call 1st precinct
15/11/2011	02:26	Born_Analog #OWS library being trashed by NYPD now - feels symbolic of what major US cities are currently doing to their #libraries. #occupychicago
15/11/2011	02:59	joeychopra People fight for literacy, NYPD throws it away. Rt OccupyWallSt: The 5k books of #thepeopleslibrary have been thrown in the trash. #Ows
15/11/2011	03:27	norock Apparently the NYPD have destroyed the donated library at #ows - I don't think you need a metaphor, but crushing 5000 books might be one.
15/11/2011	04:30	saramegan A media blackout, a dumped library, police violence and arrests. What century are we in, again? #ows
15/11/2011	06:53	willabilly If the #NYPD were trashing and burning bibles or other religious lit there would international outrage, but it's ok to destroy #ows library?
15/11/2011	07:55	PeteAJ the NYPD threw the 5000 volume #ows library in a dumpster #fahrenheit451 #ofs
15/11/2011	09:42	agolas Musing over my little bound copy of the Constitution this morning, wondering if any like it were in library destroyed by NYPD in #OWS raid

Table 42: A sample of tweets referring to the destruction of the OWS library

Additionally, as we can observe from Figure 32 below, there were a significant number of tweets being tweeted about the destruction of the library throughout the day. This was due to the fact that people were both in shock and angered about the violence and the barbaric destruction of property such as books. However, the number of tweets reduced as soon as information that books could be salvaged from the New York sanitation

department were shared at 6am, thus alleviating suspicions that the books would be burned or thrown away.

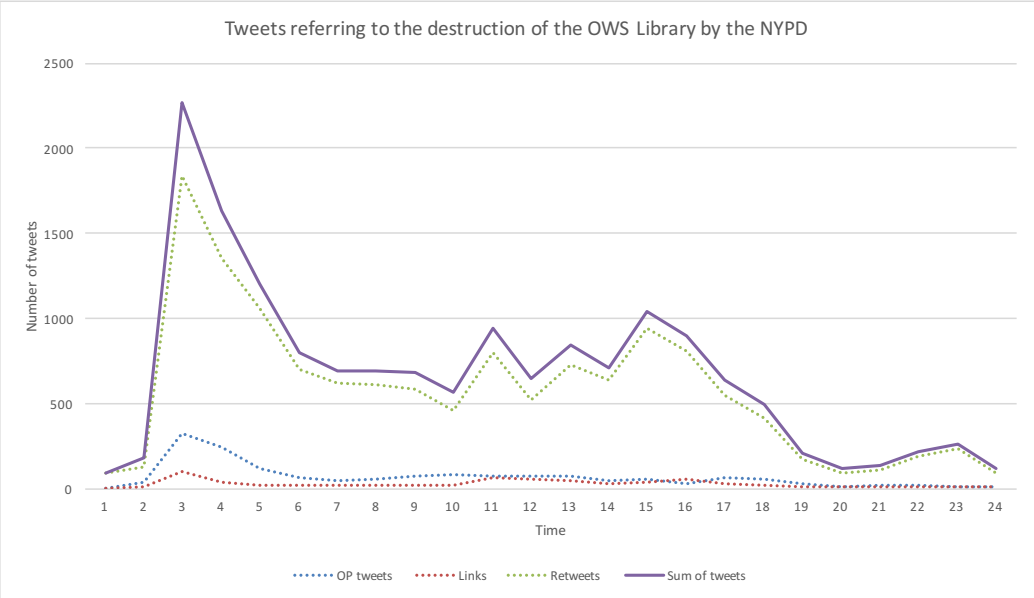


Figure 32: The distribution of all the tweets referring to the destruction of the OWS library by the NYPD on the eviction day

The destruction of the library became even more powerful after the allegations that the NYPD both teargassed protesters who remained at Zuccotti Park (they stood in the grounds of the OWS' kitchen), and cut trees inside the park to prevent people from chaining themselves to them. Eventually the reports of tear gas were shown to be incorrect, with reports saying that the alleged tear gas was only a fire extinguisher used in the kitchen. The pre-existing belief of the protesters that teargassing *could* and *would* happen, made this belief of teargassing more convincing and instigated stories built on inaccuracy (n=571):

Date	Time	Tweet
15/11/2011	03:37	DemonTomatoDave “They've teargassed the people in the food tent!” You guys are all on top of things more than me, but if not already, watch #OWS right now.
15/11/2011	03:37	andrewvanwey Watching #OWS unfold. Sad that NYPD chooses to use its police presence to tear down tents rather than build dialogue.
15/11/2011	03:37	FerdBurfel New reports of occupiers being teargassed in the food tent at The Kitchen in Zuccotti. #OWS
15/11/2011	03:38	latentexistence Tear gas on non-violent protesters. Has anyone told NYPD that “just obeying orders” is not a valid defence? #Ows
15/11/2011	03:41	RedBrownandBlue No major news network coverage on tv, no media allowed in park or air over park, teargas, sound cannons and brutality unchecked. USA? #OWS
15/11/2011	03:42	MarcusRSilva #NYPD is tear gassing #ows
15/11/2011	03:26	irishauthor NYPD sawing down trees at #OWS, trash 5K books from library, bulldozers entering Liberty Park, supporters massing on surrounding streets
15/11/2011	03:18	gmarceau NYPD sawing down trees at Zuchotti park right now #ows. It is a poetic force of destruction, this NYPD.
15/11/2011	03:39	pi8you Rumors of NYPD cutting down trees in Zuccotti Park to get at remaining protestors #ows
15/11/2011	04:42	erniesfo NYPD cut down trees to prevent people occupying trees. Similar to Sherman's “march to the sea” scorched earth campaign...#OWS
15/11/2011	05:40	justanotweet Do you always chop down trees in the middle of the night with #mediablackout #ows #occupywall street

Table 43: A sample of tweets mentioning the falsely reported teargassing at OWS

Even though reports of the tear gas being a fire extinguisher started surfacing ten minutes later, a few tear gas stories were still being tweeted until much later, as shown in Table 44:

Date	Time	Tweet
15/11/2011	03:45	raindrift: Correction: what we suspected was tear gas via the livestream was actually a fire extinguisher. Small miracles... #Ows
15/11/2011	03:50	fullofhype: Conflicting reports from the Kitchen. Teargassed or no?! #OWS
15/11/2011	03:50	MaxBlumenthal: Reports of teargas not confirmed, conflicting reports coming in. I'm watching vid of cops destroying kitchen now. #OWS
15/11/2011	03:51	maksumuto: or maybe no teargas. apparently conflicting reports... #ows, wird sich klГ¤ren
15/11/2011	04:14	implowshun: JoshHarkinson reporter on scene pepper spray NOT tear gas OR fire extinguisher #OWS #OO #OLSX #Syntagma #Tahrir #OSF #OccupyPortland #OSLC
15/11/2011	04:27	puppaz: Hearing reports that not only pepper spray but teargas is also being used on peaceful protesters. Not sure if it's accurate yet but ffs #ows
15/11/2011	09:49	rosquet: Sound canons, tear gas, and suppression of the media. But don't worry: there are No Labels. #Ows
15/11/2011	12:32	hivedev: Some excited trader is watching his tear gas, riot gear, and pepper spray portfolio surge. #Ows

Table 44: A sample of tweets referring to the teargassing hours after it was falsely reported

It is interesting to note how the outrage and the affective publics of OWS formed such a strong desire to share, which allowed rumours such as this one to travel far and to influence narratives of the movement. Nonetheless, the focus here is on the ‘use of force’ micro-narrative, as one forming the bigger narrative against police violence.

In a similar way to other narratives against violence, namely the destruction

of the OWS library, the teargassing of the protesters, and the violent removal of the last remaining protesters from the park, the stories about the council-member Ydanis Rodríguez and his injury caused by the police, played a big part in the police violence narrative, and more specifically in the micro-narrative of the use of force. In these tweets (n=138) people reported on the injury and denounced police brutality:

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
15/11/11	02:43	JumaaneWilliams: I can report that ydanis, a Council Member, has been arrested at #OWS & is bleeding from the head.
15/11/11	02:49	GZornick so far we have reports of NYPD barring all press, and beating up a NYC City Council member. this is going to backfire in a major way. #OWS
15/11/11	02:56	DantePosh NYC council-member Ydanis Rodriguez arrested and bleeding from head. - why is that, NYPD??? #ows
15/11/11	07:57	gmarceau (Unconfirmed) NYtimes reporter arrested. My concilmember Ydanis Rodrigues arrested and bleeding from head. #OWS bekamop
15/11/11	02:57	iiamelii Report that ydanis, #NYC Council Member, has been #arrested at #OWS & is bleeding from the head thanks to the #NYPD. JumaaneWilliams
15/11/11	02:58	B_Twe5_G City council member Ydanis Rodriguez attacked by #NYPD and visibly bleeding from the head. #OWS
15/11/11	02:58	OccupyWallSt City council member Ydanis Rodriguez beaten by #nypd and bleeding from head. #Ows
15/11/11	03:02	AidanAmavi NYPD attack and arrest NYC council member ydanis leaving him bleeding, steal credentials from reporters, lock local residents indoors #ows

Table 45: A sample of tweets denouncing police brutality and the use of force

The story evolved slowly but steadily throughout the day, with people reporting on the development of Ydanis' health and expressing their dismay towards the police, the NYC authorities, and the way they dealt with Rodrigues (Table 46):

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
15/11/11	03:24	FR3D05 So NYC Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez was beaten by the #NYPD. Damn, they whoopin everyone. #OWS
15/11/11	03:54	madelinemaser I can report that ydanis,a #NYC Council Member, has been #arrested at #OccupyWallStreet & is bleeding from the head thanks to #NYPD. #OWS
15/11/11	04:18	leerader reports of nyc councilman arrested & severely beaten at #ows. sketchy details. anyone know if it's true & who it is?
15/11/11	04:46	VeeZyMtl ydanis, a #NYC Council Member, has been #arrested at #OccupyWallStreet & is bleeding from the head thanks to the #NYPD. #ows
15/11/11	09:32	SandraHelena39 Zucotti Park in downtown Manhattan-site of #OWS-now forcibly cleared out-NY city councilman beaten up by #NYPD & in hospital
15/11/11	11:20	Ryan_Konky Ydanis Rodriguez, NY Council member bled from the head from NYPD. I guess he was inciting violence as well, most oblivious ones? #OWS
15/11/11	13:50	grimwomyn Please join us at Foley Square for a press conference with Clergy, community leaders, and the city councilmember who was arrested. #Ows

Table 46: A sample of tweets referring to councilman Ydanis Rodriguez's injury

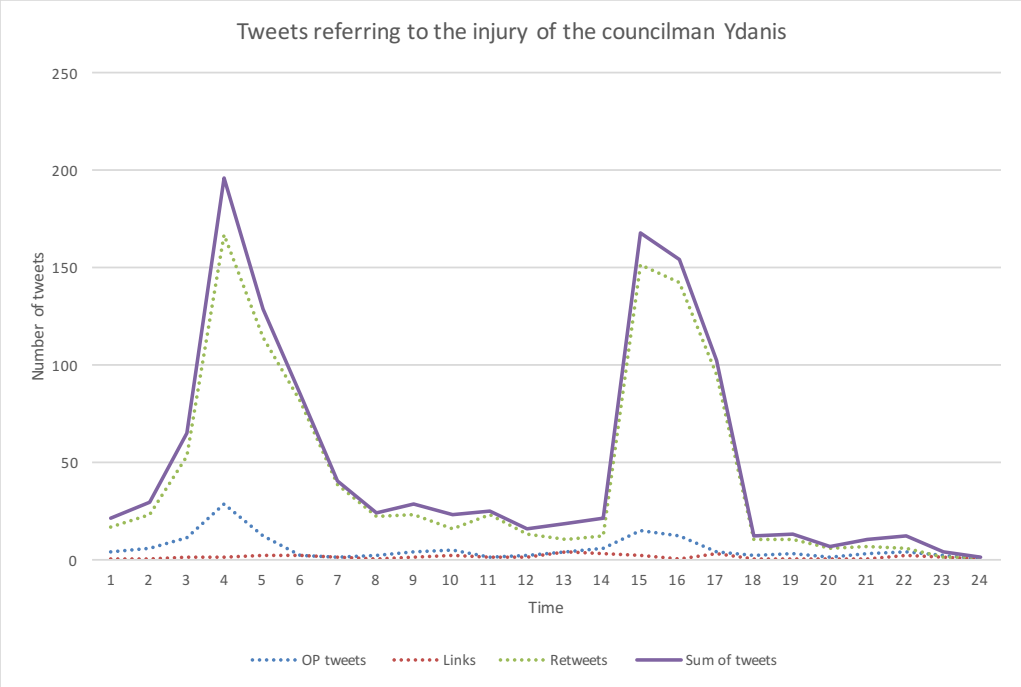


Figure 33: The distribution of all the tweets mentioning the injury of the New York councilman Ydanis Rodriguez during the evacuation day

In Figure 33, we can observe that tweets referring to the injury of Rodriguez rose at 4am, at which point the tweets mentioning his head bleeding spread. Tweets later rose again at 4pm when he made an announcement regarding his involvement with OWS, and he acknowledged his support for the movement and its causes, thus distancing himself from the position of authority he held as a NY Council member, and placing himself on the same level as the protesters.

Rodriguez, later sued the city, arguing that he was a victim of police violence, and won. He donated his $30,000 settlement to the Centre for Constitutional Rights in March 2015.[63] Of most significance here is the fact that these micro-narratives scratch the surface of an important area for further research. Around the world, people are using social media to express their dissatisfaction with the ways in which police use force to subdue them

[63] Barkan, R. (2015). *Councilman Arrested at Occupy Wall Street Donates His Settlement Cash*. *Observer*. Retrieved 29 September 2016, from http://observer.com/2015/03/councilman-arrested-at-occupy-wall-street-donates-his-settlement-cash/

(Castells, 2015). These infrastructures and processes of storytelling offer a different way of engaging with the movement than with on-the-ground action. In other respects, these kinds of stories tap into essential communication channels. In what follows I will look into the narrative of 'communication with protesters'. In the process, I will explore the problematic nature of the relationship between protesters, the authorities, and the police themselves.

7.3.3 Communication with protesters

The first two dominant narratives forming the police violence narrative of OWS were 'honouring the First Amendment' and the 'use of force'. Now the discussion will turn towards the problematic and antagonistic nature of the occupiers, the NYPD, Mayor Bloomberg, and President Obama. In this micro-narrative, we can see stories attacking the NYPD, and Bloomberg as the master planner of the eviction. Indeed, Bloomberg considered the NYPD as his personal army, and Obama as the authority figure who betrayed OWS by allowing the eviction to take place. Bloomberg argued that Obama also allowed the NYPD to ban the press from the park, and permitted police violence to take place through his inability to control the situation. The NYPD alone received 1,249 mentions on the day of the eviction, from tweets accusing them of brutality, to their inability to understand the protesters and their struggles. Here, however, I focus on the tweets mentioning specific figures of authority, who were characterised as responsible and were held accountable for this eviction. Furthermore, I will argue that they failed to communicate with the protesters or to connect with them in a substantial, meaningful way. 1,691 OP tweets mentioned Bloomberg, either in the text of the tweet or as a hashtag, calling him out for authorising the eviction:

Date	Time	Tweet
15/11/2011	01:44	CerveauxJumeaux Classy move, Bloomberg/NYPD. 1 AM raid: clearly legitimate. #OWS
15/11/2011	02:16	DJtightyWhitey Dear NYPD & Mayor Bloomberg: It may be 2am, but thousands are still watching. Is this violent raid really wise? #OWS
15/11/2011	02:24	LibertyBelle4 Whatever rationale Bloomberg and NYPD use to clear the park of tents, there is no defense whatsoever for interference with the press. #Ows
15/11/2011	02:59	ApertureLogan MikeBloomberg NYCMayorsOffice What is the meaning of the #OWS raid, in which property is being destroyed & why are the press locked out?
15/11/2011	03:12	SteeleTy #NYPD #MayorBloomberg your actions will blow up in your face. You think this is over? Not by a long shot!!! #OWS #Zuccotti
15/11/2011	04:01	saw_you_drown Michael #Bloomberg and #NYPD should be charged with crimes against humanity, domestic terrorism #ows #occupy
15/11/2011	04:22	sosodeformed All in the middle of the night with no press allowed. This is setting us back hundreds of years MikeBloomberg WHAT are you thinking? #ows

Table 47: A sample of tweets mentioning Mayor Bloomberg

Similarly, Obama was accused of blocking the constitutional right of the protesters to assemble, abandoning his promises when he first showed support for the movement, and thus betraying the movement 'of change' he called for in his election campaign (Table 48):

Date	Time	Tweet
15/11/2011	02:32	SMorgan3090 BarackObama it is a constitutional right of the protestors to assemble and you allow the NYPD to violate it? That's pathetic #ows #p2
15/11/2011	03:20	GeoJery Mr. barackobama NYPD is repressing the #OWS in the same way as barbarian egyptian police so #WTF and fuck your fake american democracy
15/11/2011	03:40	sybian602 BarackObama as a constitutional scholar and our president, how can you watch the rights of your citizens and the press being trampled? #Ows
15/11/2011	03:54	OHMYGUMZ I wonder why barackobama hasn't sent in the national guard to protect the #ows protesters from the NYPD??? FDR where are you???
15/11/2011	04:25	Mr_Lexington Obama endorsed #ows are now occupying several NYPD paddy wagons. Now isn't that special. #tcot
15/11/2011	05:41	naoelll Is this what Obama meant by 'Hope and Change'? #OWS invaded and destroyed by the NYPD.

Table 48: A sample of tweets accusing Obama of betraying the movement

This difference in approaches was also apparent in the ways in which the NYPD cleaned out the park: by throwing away the protesters' possessions. Twitterers responded with 141 tweets, shaming the police and underlining the severity of the violence:

Date	Time	Tweet
15/11/2011	02:17	OccupySamIAm #NYPD loading all of tents, donations, possessions into dumpsters #OWS #zuccotti park
15/11/2011	02:18	seanbedlam NYPD fucking up again by attacking #OWS and destroying their belongings? Priceless. We will win, the Man will fail. Epically.
15/11/2011	03:24	inwpress 3:15 am NYPD destroying personal items. Occupiers prevented from leaving with their possessions. #OccupyWallStreet #OccupyTogether #OWS #US
15/11/2011	12:10	AboveAverageA Some really upset homeless people here, who lost all their possessions in the surprise NYPD raid #OWS via nyciso
15/11/2011	12:16	kthalps “It's so hard to find good help these days.” - mikeBloomberg on NYPD throwing occupiers' belongings, books, art etc into dumpsters. #ows.
15/11/2011	16:03	MrTimPape Heart goes out 2 #ows (and other movements) that were forcibly removed & had many of their possessions taken (which is being underreported)

Table 49: A sample of tweets shaming the police

All of these micro-narratives involve processes of acceptance and the transformation of ideas, as the users’ actions needed to be rendered meaningful to the movement, and effective within the context of the eviction taking place, in which their beliefs were being crushed. As the two micro-narratives around Obama and Bloomberg developed, more reactions against the lack of communication channels between these authority figures and the movement were put into circulation, and in turn inspired more twitterers to take action and/or to tweet. A lot of these responses (n= 687) ended up with people asking users to call into the NYPD’s offices and the Mayor’s office and to demand the halt of the evacuation (Table 50):

Date	Time	Tweet
15/11/2011	01:08	technum Trying to call 311 to keep NYPD goons out, but calls are failing. #Ows
15/11/2011	01:34	UltraLiblan Call 212-639-9675, and leave a message with the mayor's office. I've been on hold for 10 mins. The whole world is watching. #Ows
15/11/2011	01:47	EcoSexuality Called #NYPD and spoke gently, as soon as the word #Zucotti left my lips, the cop hung up. #OWS
15/11/2011	01:53	Farin16 CALL #NYPD TO DEMAND THEY STOP THEIR ILLEGAL ACTIONS (212) 334-0611 OccupyWallSt OccupyArrests OccupyWallStNYC #OWS NYCMayorsOffice
15/11/2011	01:54	Tortured_Verse Call the First Precinct NYPD and tell them to leave Zuccoti Park alone: 212-334-0611 #OccupyWallStreet #OWS #p2 #wiunion #OccupyOakland
15/11/2011	02:00	theyesmen If not in NYC call Mayor 212-639-9675 NYPD: 646-610-5000 NY Gov: (518) 474-8390 #ows
15/11/2011	04:17	victorwilde Call #NYPD at: 646-610-5000 and demand that they respect 1st amendment rights. #OWS #Occupy #OccupyWallSt #LibertySq #LibertySquare
15/11/2011	07:19	brucewagner Upset about #OWS? Call! NYPD 1st Prec: 212.334.0611 NYPD Booking: 718.875.6303 NYPD Internal Affairs: 212.487.7350 City Hall: 212.788.3058”

Table 50: A sample of tweets asking people to call into the NYPD’s offices and the Mayor’s office

As Figure 34 shows below, Bloomberg was mentioned constantly during the eviction day, either through tweets, retweets, or tweets with links. This

resulted in a fluctuating story forming around him, which had its own spikes and rises. The first rises came when the NYPD entered the park, under the orders of the Mayor, while the rise between 8am and 9pm referred to his press conference regarding the eviction. Again, at 1pm, he became one of the central characters defining the story of the eviction, when he released a statement regarding the park's use by the protesters, and insisted that people could not stay at the park during the night.

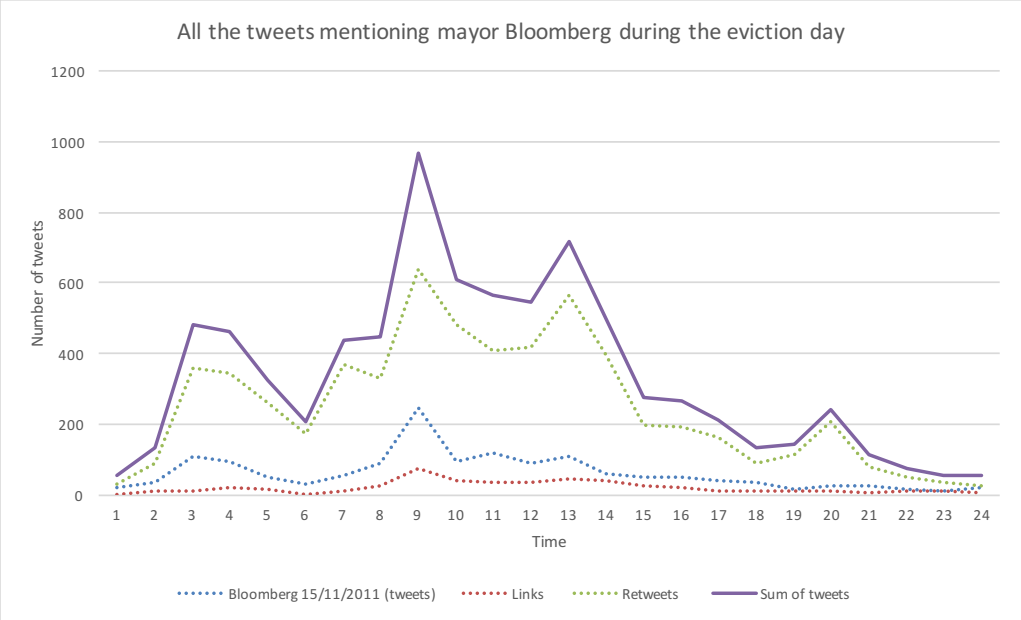


Figure 34: The distribution of all the tweets mentioning Mayor Bloomberg during the eviction day

Laying out these miscellaneous models of political engagement has shed light on an understanding of *what matters* as politics in the contemporary digital world. By recognising the need for building better channels of communication between social movements, social media, and the authorities, we also can reflect on the role of the authorities in other social movements' stories.

7.3.4 Arrests

Having started this part of the chapter with the narratives of 'honouring the first Amendment', 'use of force', and 'unsuccessful communication with

protesters', and having mapped out a different use of social media response to violence, I want to end with perhaps the most significant micro-narrative of police violence: arresting the protesters and the police brutality against occupiers during the eviction. 1,097 stories emerged on Twitter to protest the arrests and the zip-cuffing of all the protesters who stayed behind to 'hold the fort' at the encampment in Zuccotti Park:

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
15/11/2011	01:25	rePetePro NYPD has surrounded Zuccotti Park w/ officers in riot gear; plans to arrest protesters who refuse an order to leave #OWS
15/11/2011	03:18	Anon_is_you "Arrest Teams Heading to BROADWAY AND LIBERTY!" #OWS #ZUCOTTIPARK #occupywallstreet #occupyNYC STAY PEACEFUL! #Thewholeworldiswatching
15/11/2011	03:33	brandonmfischer Around 50 arrests reported by the kitchen at Zuccoti. #OWS #OccupyWallStreet
15/11/2011	03:34	inferno10 Sounds like everyone in Zuccotti Park is being arrested by NYPD. #Ows
15/11/2011	03:39	chrisnizza 'The peaceful people from the kitchen have just been tear gassed, they were wrestled to the ground and then arrested.' #OWS #livestream
15/11/2011	04:10	Ghostpickles #OWS NYPD sending arrest wagons to Broadway and Fulton also Washington Sq. park via scanner
15/11/2011	04:20	viewofadam Sanitation trucks have arrived at the parks and are currently cleaning the area 'Still making arrests in park' - NY 1 reporter #ows

Table 51: A sample of tweets referring to the arrests at Zuccotti Park

As we can observe from Figure 35, tweets mentioning the NYPD fluctuated throughout the day, but were mostly retweets, while links were low in numbers. This suggests two things. First, people's outrage with the NYPD was fuelled by seeing retweets being tweeted on their timelines, which brought even more retweets. Second, the fivefold number of tweets being tweeted and retweeted, during the hours of 2am to 5am, illustrates how live action brings up more engagement and more participation on Twitter, especially if that action is considered an injustice, or if there is already someone to blame, to stand *against* or stand *for*.

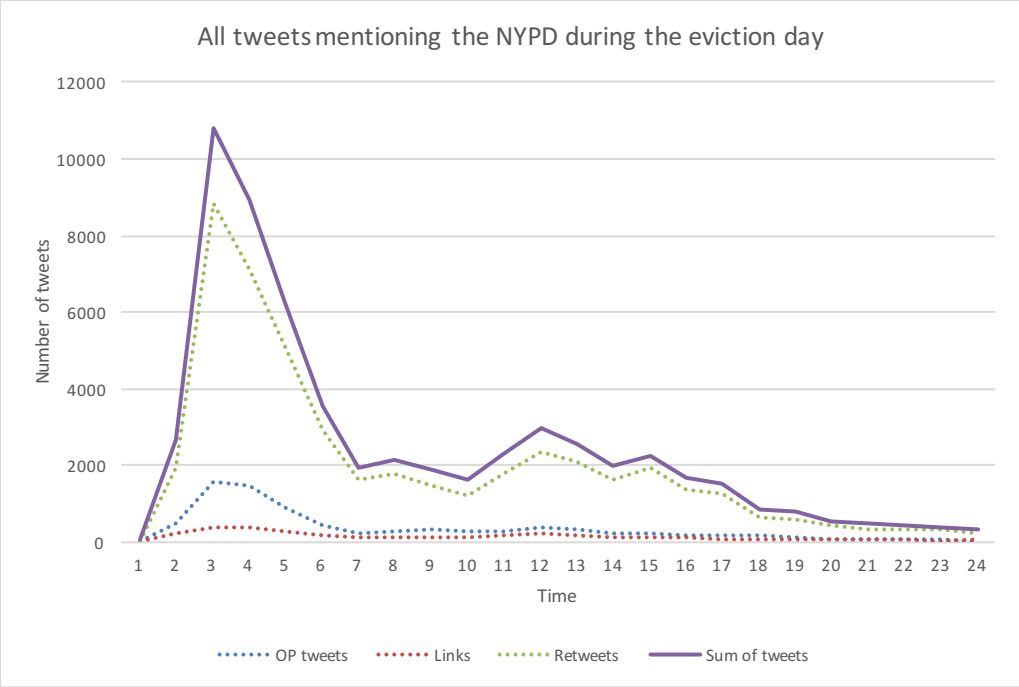


Figure 35: The distribution of tweets mentioning the NYPD during the eviction day

Similarly, Figure 36 shows a spike at 4am during which time police arrested the 100 last protesters who were left in the park, zip-cuffing them and taking them to the police station. The later big spikes show the engagement of twitterers in the discussion of the arrestees being released from custody. During this time, the sentiment of injustice was much more palpable: by being released so soon, it was suggested that the police held no charges against them and their only reason for arresting them was to clean the park of the protesters. Again, retweets prevailed over OP tweets and tweets with links, but this figure evidently shows the engagement rate and participatory formats that twitterers use during live action: mostly retweeting, because they plausibly trust that others have the valid information needed, and because of their conviction that information needs to be kept in circulation at all times.

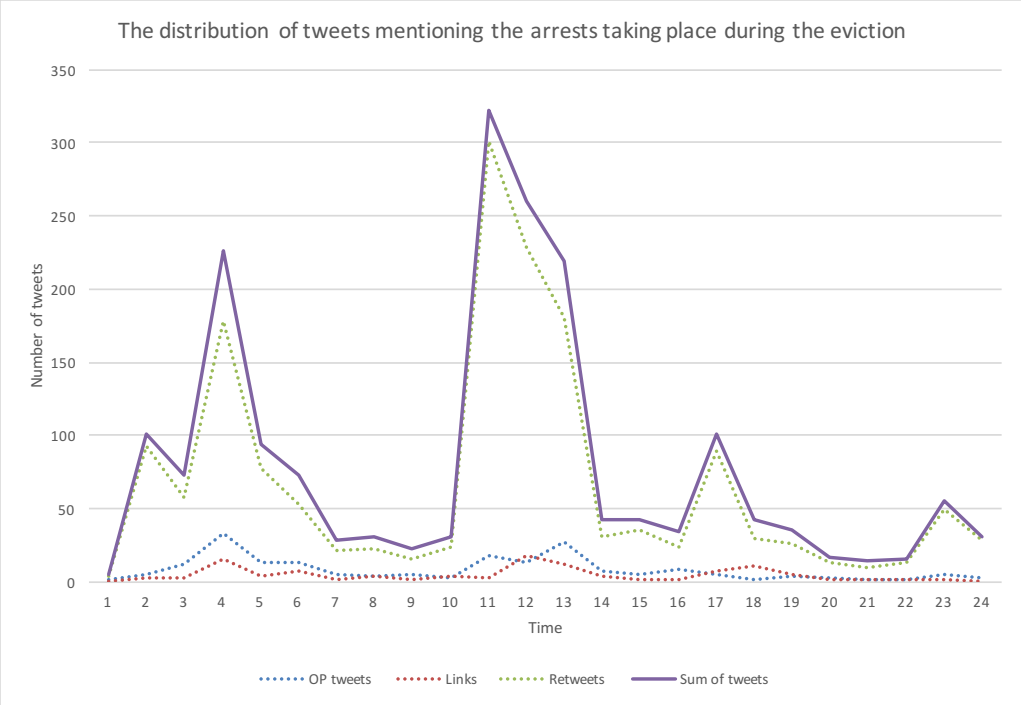


Figure 36: The distribution of tweets mentioning the arrests taking place during the eviction day

7.4 Does this make Twitter political?

The widespread use of Twitter as a platform that makes visible one's political commentary has been demonstrated in the micro-narratives against police violence that I have previously described: honouring the First Amendment, use of force, communication with protesters, and arrests. Through them I sought to stage a counterargument against the dominant assumptions that social media are only platforms of narcissistic utterances (Turkle, 2015). In this chapter I have unveiled how Twitter is used as a tool for exposing injustices and abuse. From police violence to the authorities' disregard, violence was more prevalent during the evacuation of the protesters than on any other day. Twitter here became the vehicle to voice resistance against injustice and to support social movements, particularly during on-the-ground manifestations of violence. Twitter thus emerged as a platform to express a shared desire for a need to change the current political system; a system that should respect the US constitution and overcome police brutality. Social media give a glimpse into a future in which change may not come through

new policies and governments, but from the social behaviour that is a product of 'collective action'. This collective civic action enables people to question dominant approaches and processes, and to offer individual and collective opinions, either online or on-the-ground, about new ways of conduct.

The visibility Twitter offered to opinions that highlighted the unfairness of the US authorities during the eviction, and sought to attract more participants in the discussion during that morning and the rest of the day on the 15th of November, unveils the plausible political character of Twitter. Social media's ability to make something visible is enough to consider them as important tools for social change. Indeed, making injustice and violence visible opens up one more arena and invites more individuals to engage. Social media can continue and enhance these practices because they can access more individuals in a space where the boundaries of place and time are more fluid. We should hence be thinking of the social and the political elements of these platforms as intertwined entities, which work collectively, co-creating ephemeral content with political dimensions.

OWS had to adjust and adapt to the new 'repertoires of protest control' (Gillham, Edwards, and Noakes, 2013), in which escalated force took over from negotiated management techniques. This altered the four main parameters of protest policing in the USA articulated by McPhail et al. (1998): a) honouring First Amendment rights, b) respecting possible community disruption, c) keeping the communication with the protesters/demonstrators alive, d) using force, and arrests (McPhail et al., 1998). These changes have had a direct impact on the ways in which social movements make use of their free assembly rights and speech as citizens of western democracies.

In this chapter, I examined the eviction case not only as a case that assigns to the on-the-ground protests an important role, but which also gives primary importance to the perseverance and transmission of OWS' narratives on

Twitter. Twitter's digital dynamics, cultural properties, and political affordances provide a framework of participation where the mechanisms of social practice can and are being carried out. Sceptics of technology understandably argue that online communication lacks the important factor of social presence, which brings with it the skills to identify body-language cues, facial expression, and tone. Since social media lack these capacities, they thus are capable of breeding misconceptions, miscommunication, and antisocial behaviour, such as trolling, which I discussed in the previous chapter (Sproull and Kiesler, 1991). Yet, research has also shown that people with long-lasting communication channels/platforms/pathways tend to get to know each other better, become familiar with shared patterns of communication and forms of expression, and learn how to be civil and minimise antisocial behaviour. Eventually, they tell stories that are much more coherent and which form stronger collective identities (Walther, 1992). The following chapter will go into exploring the identity formations of OWS, and will suggest a new concept for talking about social movements in the era of social media infused protests.

8. From Collective Identity to a Shared Multifaceted Identity

8.1 Introduction: The New Grammars of Identity

The use of Twitter during OWS' lifespan has brought to light new means of communication for social movements: the kind of social movements in which written online communication becomes vital to their functioning, and where the level of sharing one's experiences or ideas on a social media platform is 'culturally driven and cross-culturally manifold' (Žižek, 2008: 129). OWS' identity cannot hence be described within the traditional dimensions of social movements, which until today have been using solidarity as their means of labelling (Gamson, 1975), and whose actors articulated themselves through the master-signifier of a political or cultural identity (McAdam et al., 2001). In this chapter, I argue that some of the dimensions of OWS' identity can be examined by analysing the *identity grammars* that construct it on Twitter. I will achieve this by looking more closely into the language people use to tell personal and collective stories on Twitter. In what follows, I first discuss the ways in which the use of personal pronouns (I, me, mine, we, us, our) on Twitter may be the first step in tracing the identity of the movement. Then I examine the dynamics between the personal micro-narrative and the collective micro-narrative of the movement, highlighting what they mean for OWS' identity. Finally, I argue that OWS' identity is formed through the combination of these two micro-narratives, which together shape a shared multifaceted identity for OWS.

Previous chapters have argued that Twitter was used as a tool to react against the mainstream media's misinformation and misguidance of the public regarding OWS (Chapter 5). The shift from mainstream media representations of the movement, to social media representation of OWS, created wider and more reactive media ecology for the movement on Twitter. In Chapter 6, I discussed how aggressors against OWS used Twitter to attack,

dehumanise, and belittle the movement and its protesters. Abuse narratives ranged from calling the protesters dirty hippies, to calling them commies, Marxists, and Nazis. In contrast to the first negative sentiments that charged the stories, Chapter 7, examined the ways in which narratives against violence created a much more tied community between the protesters, connecting them through their resistance against the same 'enemy', the NYPD, and affording Twitter with political dimensions. This chapter brings all these themes together, arguing that the narratives and micro-narratives that have been discussed in the course of this thesis produce a different kind of collective identity for OWS: a shared multifaceted identity, which can be traced in the processes of the narratives that construct it.

The overarching significance of narrative in social life is perhaps nowhere more clearly and forcefully demonstrated than in the recent proliferation of the identity-related groups and organisations that fall under the rubric of New Social Movements (NSMs). The study of narrative as a key to accessing personal, social, and cultural identity has also been used in studies conducted by McAdams (1988, 1993), MacIntyre (1981), and Polkinghorne (1988). However the underlying importance of narrative in social movements has become clearer and more emphatic in the contemporary conception of identity-intertwined movements and groups, classified as 'the square protests'. OWS was one of the plethora of Occupy movements that sprung up after 2011 and were labelled, albeit very loosely, as 'the square protests' or 'protest camps' (Feigenbaum, Frenzel, and McCurdy, 2013). The proliferation of this particular genre of occupying-spaces movements, as I have argued in the literature review, constituted what can be defined as a *networked movement* (see also Gerbaudo, 2012; Castells, 2006). I bring the element of a networked movement back now because first, it is important to remember that the technologies, networks, and media OWS engaged its members and supporters with, were a lifeline for the construction of a shared identity and a community ethos between activists and OWS' supporters. This in turn implemented a social awareness *in* and *through* which identity was 'socially

bestowed [and] socially sustained' (Berger, 1963: 98) at Zuccotti Park, but on platforms such as Twitter too. Second, I bring it back in order to support the idea that OWS was a movement that held context at its core. This context—apart from local, economic, social, cultural, and technological dimensions—also relied on Twitter's quality as a collective device that could, and still can, cultivate a collective sense of belonging and meaning (see Johnston and Klandermans, 1995a, 1995b; Laraña, Johnston, and Gusfield, 1994).

This chapter hence seeks to unpack the characteristics of a contemporary shared identity for OWS by combining social media analysis with narrative concepts. This final chapter is focused entirely on a thematic analysis of the identity narratives of Twitter. The analysis at times touches upon the plot through which this produced multifaceted identity developed and changed. However, the main concern of this chapter is to unpack the personal and collective identities formed through the thematic narratives on Twitter. In the course of doing so, I will examine the content of OP tweets under the #OWS hashtag, with the unveiling of the personal and collective stories becoming the focus of investigation. Taking into account the communication taking place on Twitter, and the fact that this kind of self-expression is now infused into 'the human systems of interaction' (Urry, 2002; 2003), the interest of this chapter lies not in preserving the commonplace observations of social media communications, but instead in the discussions of how tweets as stories told on Twitter flesh out micro-narratives that narrate OWS' multifaceted identity. I begin this discussion by analysing the emplotment of the collective and personal identity micro-narratives, before moving on to an investigation of the stories constructing the two. Finally, I argue that OWS identity is a mixture of personal and collective expressions of identity.

8.1.1 Identity storytelling: Emploting identity grammars

In order to investigate the movement's identity, this chapter draws on Melucci's (2000) definition of contemporary narration as 'a mass attractor, independent of the technical capacity or the creative gifts of the author, and

this is because narration is one way of responding to the challenge of identity' (2000: 112). I argue that by looking at the narratives people use to tweet and communicate on Twitter we can discern the *identity grammars* that construct the story of the movement on Twitter, and can begin to see how tweets begin to structure a new kind of contemporary collective identity for the movement. As we have seen from previous chapters, the use of common language—from slogans to word choices—has played a major role in the construction and discussion of OWS. This especially applied to the ways in which the narrative of *creating something together* or *defending something together* was developed in the narrative against police violence. While stories I have discussed previously have tapped into violence coming from within the platform, and the condemnation of the police's actions and of mainstream media's representation of OWS, the narratives these stories formed often drew more explicitly on reactive processes as a point of access into the storytelling process of OWS. Furthermore, they drew on the ephemeral dimensions of their stories. Over time, their stories compiled a grassroots content world of Twitter stories that supporters and activists could identify with.

Twitter's storytelling capacities have guided the discussions in this thesis. In the same way, in this chapter, storytelling becomes the answer to the challenge of tracing the movement's social media identity, since each tweet builds up and collectively composes the multivocalities that are the concrete foundations of the movement's story on Twitter. Indeed, the structures and plots of stories can be considered parts of their architecture (De Fina, 2003). OWS' tweets demonstrate that the movement's identity is neither fixed nor horizontal, but constantly changing. OWS is therefore not built on a single entity or individual, but rather on one that emerges as a collection of stories that expresses a multitude of emotions, reactions, and ideas. This in turn creates a mega-story filled with many interpretations, ambiguities, and definitions. That is the main reason this discussion focuses on the specific written elements that produce this identity of multifaceted threads and

types, instead of looking into the broad picture of the movement, like so many studies have done before. If an identity is constantly in process, changing over time, discussing it within an interdisciplinary sociological and narrative framework will unveil more elements of the movement's culture.

As I have discussed in the previous chapters, Twitter neither led the movement, nor brought it into action, but it undoubtedly emboldened the protesters, sustained their conviction that they are not alone and linked people all around the world in the shared aim of acting in an instant, prompt and emotional way (Feigenbaum, Frenzel and McCurdy, 2013; Gerbaudo, 2012). Twitter's digital dynamics, cultural properties, and political affordances have provided a crucial framework for participation and communication for the movement, where 'the mechanisms of social practice' (McDonald, 2006: 225) could and are still being carried out. Twitter has predominantly become an *ad hoc* space that has aided in the creation of a sphere that has appropriated written communication through a form of cultural participation that has transformed public engagement.

With this in mind, I argue that contemporary social movements' identities such as OWS', can be best captured via a process that Alberto Melucci summarised as a shift from generality to individuality, where 'individuals are becoming the core of what once would have been called "social structure"' (Melucci 2000:45). The 'individuality' of Twitter's affective culture is produced here by both discourses of personal and collective micro-narratives, instead of just political or social structures (Castells, 2007). By moving away from the study of the structure—the network of OWS—to the discourses—the content of communication on Twitter—OWS' identity narrative is deconstructed into smaller parts: its stories. These stories provide an insight into the storytelling expression that Twitter granted OWS' activists and supporters. Examining the personal and collective stories users tweeted about and the kinds of stories they told, this chapter highlights the importance of the contemporary social culture that emanated from the

experiences and stories of this contemporary movement (Bennett and Sagerberg, 2012).

This chapter therefore focuses on identity expressive tweets throughout the forty last days of OWS on the ground, and shows how the increasingly contested, but also complementary, personal and collective micro-narratives that characterised OWS' culture, influenced the identity of the movement *per se*. The primary qualitative analysis of 10,000 tweets, as discussed in more detail in the conceptual and methodological framework chapter, showed that users tended to express their personal stories through the use of the singular person pronouns, 'I', 'me', and 'mine', while they preferred to use the plural pronouns 'we', 'us', and 'our' to express their collective stories.[64] Similar to the work of McGarthy et al. (2014), where social identity is seen to encapsulate a shared opinion on an in-group defining opposition to an out-group, we can see how the OWS group defines itself as opposed to the Other, that being the mainstream media, the government, or their aggressors. The methodology of this chapter was based on the computational selection (during the second step of NTA) of two identity micro-narratives, which

[64] The terms used here to describe tweeters are not to be taken as models that indicate a single 'group', 'community', or 'movement'. It is difficult to think of a 'we' without imagining the specific expression of a group, but it is the implicit use of the pronoun that gives social and cultural value to what it represents in a lager context. There is no concept of 'we', however, that can merge all the 'Wes' that are uttered at every moment in the tweets of the users on Twitter. The 'we' then, does not denominate a single collective entity. 'We' refers to the act of collective discourse in which it is written, and by this it designates a number of collective OWS entities, including: 'the people', 'the occupiers', 'the Americans', 'the 99%', 'the protesters', 'the activists'and 'the supporters of OWS'. It is a term that, similar to 'I', cannot be restricted to a single definition except in what I called earlier "the instantaneous commentary pit". In this case, there is only a momentary discursive reference to the 'group', 'community', or 'movement' each user identifies with at the time of tweeting. The subjectivity that 'we' refers to is the subjectivity of the discourse it (re) produces. Online collective discourse is so open here that it allows each user to appropriate a whole collective notion by labeling themselves as 'we' without having a clear conception of what 'we' refers to.

In some way, the instantaneity of Twitter puts forth 'empty' forms, which each user, in the (re) production of collective discourses, appropriates to themselves, and which they relate to 'their' personal identity. Therefore, they define themselves as a 'we' and an 'I' at the same time. The instance of a collective identity, or of a collective discourse, is thus constitutive of all the notions enclosed in the 'we,' which characterises the collective notions of OWS: 'the people', 'the occupiers', 'the Americans', 'the 99%', 'the protesters', 'the activists', 'the supporters of OWS.'

themselves were structured through the pronouns, the first through the singular pronouns (personal stories), and the second through the plural pronouns (collective stories). The next step in this analysis was directed away from the computational split of the two clusters, towards interpreting the results by manually examining and closely reading the tweets so as to qualitatively code the stories told. This second step is crucial, as simply counting instances of 'I' or 'we' would offer limited information. What will become a key process in the narrative analysis of the identity narrative here is the significance of connecting the stories told in both the personal and the collective stories.

A narrative, as this thesis argues, is a compilation of stories, a version and a retelling of moments in time, related to an individual's or a community's experiences. This retelling is chiefly a description or an account of when, where, and what happened, the people who were involved, and if what happened is still important. Personal stories are always cultural and social, and not simply political, since people seek to define themselves explicitly both as individuals and as part of a community (McDonald, 2006). Indeed, some of the tweets studied in this chapter will tell stories of the self and others of collective notions. The stories users tweeted about themselves, included personal stories that 1) debated issues regarding the movement; 2) showed their own position or support to the movement; 3) gave advice to the protesters and the movement; 4) defined OWS under specific frames; or 5) called people to be involved and/or act. Collective stories were stories that 1) expressed encouragement, 2) confidence, 3) questioned events and actions, 4) showed solidarity, 5) gave advice, 6) made announcements, 7) expressed demands, and 8) positioned the supporters of OWS in the binary of 'us' versus 'them'.

Many of the users responded to the narratives already studied in the previous chapters, while others chose to focus on other elements of the movement to express their identity. It is thus pertinent to remember that

identity was a narrative that was interwoven with all the narratives I have discussed up to now, as well as with less dominant narratives. Identity storytelling, therefore, is here defined as a process that began from the first day of the movement and is, as one can argue, still being developed and debated. These personal and collective stories contributed to, and inspired others to join Twitter conversations (Kavada, 2015), growing dispersed narratives for OWS, which relied as much on individual experiences as on the collective response of the protesters.

As we can see from Figure 37 below, tweets using the pronouns 'I', 'me', or 'mine' (the personal micro-narrative) outnumbered tweets using plural pronouns (the collective micro-narrative), with the personal stories outnumbering the collective stories by 2,232 tweets on the most popular day, the 15th of October. As I mentioned previously, this was the day of the worldwide protests in support of the movement. From the 6th of October to the 14th of November, 203,452 identity stories were tweeted under the #OWS hashtag: 115,261 were tweets using single pronouns, while the other 88,191 were collective identity stories using the plural pronouns. The personal identity grammar governed the collective identity grammar for the entirety of the movement's lifetime, with a big difference during some days, while on other days the numbers of the two micro-narratives were much closer. I choose here to focus on five of the most active days of the identity stories, in order to explore what kinds of micro-narratives the identity grammars constructed: the 14th, 15th, and the 27th of October, and the 3th and 11th of November (as the spikes below illustrate). As will be discussed, the micro-narratives that formed the identity story of the movement ranged from the everyday, as users documented their experiences at Zuccotti Park, to the reactive, as they reacted to OWS' happenings, and to their personal opinions, ideas, and recommendations.

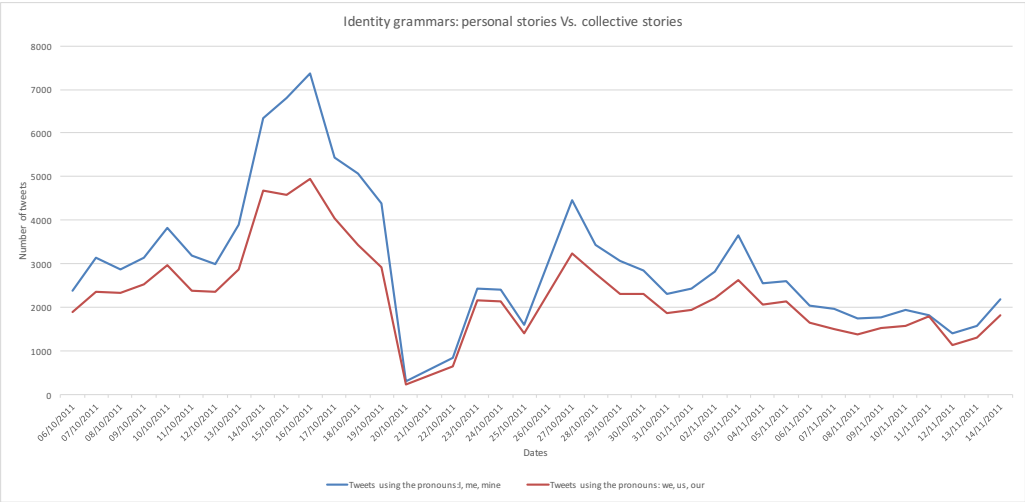


Figure 37 : The distribution of tweets using pronouns 'I', 'me', 'mine' in comparison to tweets using the pronouns 'we', 'us', 'our' during the last forty days of the movement on the ground

8.2 Who is 'us'? Expressing a Collective Identity on Twitter

In the forty days between the 6th of October and the 14th of November 2011 there was an average of 2,320 collective stories tweeted per day. Collective stories fluctuated in the first week and rose steadily from the 10th of November, the 11th, 14th and 15th, before dipping again on the 20th. The collective identity micro-narrative started to rise up again on the 23rd and the 27th of October, and the 3rd of November. The period between the 4th and the 14th November was rather stable and on the low, even though we can see that on the 14th of November the number of tweets began to rise up, as a lot of occupiers contemplated the eviction of the movement from Zuccotti Park.

More specifically, eight dominant themes emerged in the stories constructing collective identity: 1. expressing encouragement, 2. displaying confidence, 3. questioning events and actions, 4. showing solidarity, 5. giving advice, 6. making announcements, 7. expressing demands, and the stories of 8. 'us' versus 'them'. The most popular of these were the stories of 'us' versus 'them,' with 32% (n=742) of the tweets during the five days making reference to the we-ness of OWS; 18% (n=417) expressed solidarity with the movement; 15% (n= 348) made announcements to help the movement; 11%

(n=255) expressed the demands they thought the movement represented; 7% (n=162) expressed their appreciation of the protesters and the movement; another 7% questioned events or actions surrounding the movement; 5% expressed their confidence in the movement; and the last 5% gave advice to the movement.

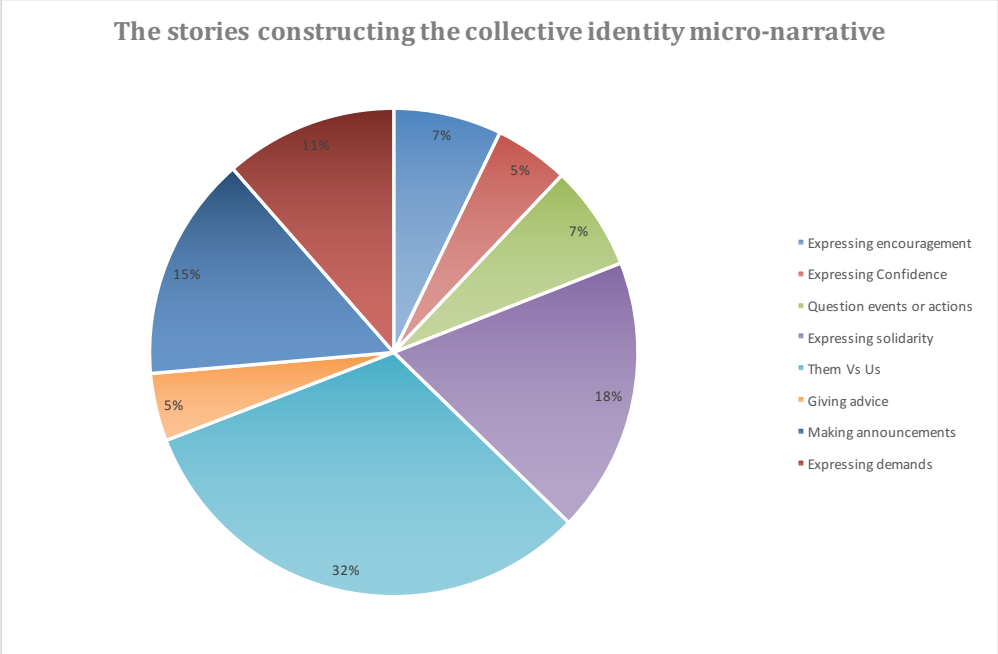


Figure 38: The themes of stories constructing the collective identity micro-narrative of OWS

The distribution of stories through the five chosen days interestingly shows that the same narratives dominated through all five days, with the stories of 'them' versus 'us' dominating over the rest of the tweets. At the same time, solidarity stories formed a big part of the micro-narrative, illustrating that the collective feeling of 'togetherness' and support can be traced on Twitter too; especially if there is an on-the-ground action-taking place. This occurred, for instance, on the 14th of October, when protesters were under the threat of eviction by the park's owners, or the 15th of October, during which protests in support of OWS spread worldwide activity, where the number of tweets concerning solidarity was much higher.

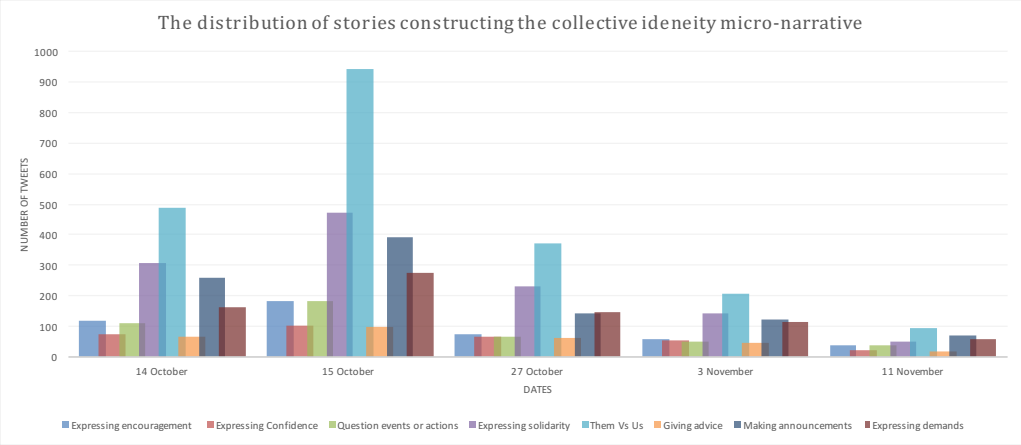


Figure 39: The distribution of the collective identity micro-narratives during the five more active days of the movement

At the heart of the collective identity micro-narrative lay the stories that expressed solidarity. These stories highlighted a collective sense of togetherness and convergence, and a lot of them relied on the 'we are the 99%' slogan. A lot more were trying to give the movement the features of a movement that was *for* the people, fellowship, and fighting together for a better future. Table 52 below shows a sample of these tweets:

Date	***Time***	***Tweet***
14/10/11	00:10	lilibballesq Major props Mruff221 your commitment to your words shows that we are all in this together. #Ows
14/10/11	10:03	tdhurst The point of #ows isn't that they want jobs--they'd like to take back our republic from our corporate overlords. Surely you support that.
14/10/11	17:31	citizens4truth #POTUS #OWS aren't unemployed failed hippies, they r the voice of Unions, Students, Drs, Lawyers, & the people who teach our children #99.9%
15/10/11	00:47	jmcaninch68 My sister is worried abt her job b/c she had surgery & needed to recoup; so she's trying to work fr home. And they wonder why we march. #Ows
15/10/11	06:02	HeavenLeeOps #iReallyHateWhenPeople bad mouth #OWS ... if they only knew we are fighting for them also. We are the 99%. Wake up people. Think of the kids
15/10/11	10:03	fullofbalogna KathHRay I believe the #OWS protests are our last chance. If people don't rise up now they will be forever silenced by the corrupt 1%.
27/10/11	17:44	barkway How goes the #Occupation? Has law enforcement joined our ranks yet? We are them, they are us, we ARE the 99% #OWS
27/10/11	22:00	Nougatrocity The implication is that because they are risking harm, we should have greater respect for them and not judge them harshly. #ows (2/?
03/11/11	14:49	ftpmatrix from #Bahrain To #OWS one voice we are with human rights and people to choose what they need. God with you
03/11/11	17:32	KevinCandow what people need to realize about #OWS is that we are a lot closer to the protesters than to the machine they are fighting against
03/11/11	23:26	reality8me2 Boom Da Boom -We occupy-Boom Da Boom-They Ocuppy-Boom DA Boom Our Occupy-All together we Occupy #ows occupyUC We're all together now
11/11/11	01:28	KezzaFree we can all reach our dreams,If we are given a chance, we see history & we need to fight for it just like they did, we can #solidarity #ows
11/11/11	09:12	BrianFWright 40 years from now... We will look back on #Occupy & realize they did more for our freedoms & rights than anyone since the 1960's. #Ows
11/11/11	09:33	H_O_G_ a_free_america well at least they us "fuck you" to our faces, rather then their usual sneaky ways. Time to get more ppl to the streets #OWS

Table 52: A sample of tweets expressing solidarity

On the one hand, solidarity stories of 'togetherness', of a collective 'fight', and of calling for support were led much of the discussion here. On the other hand, stories of encouragement gave an extra push to these solidarity stories and illustrated the more precise convictions of the protesters. These encouragement stories stimulated the moral and mental strengths of the movement, in an effort to empower it and to inspire more people to join. These stories praised the movement, while at the same time revitalised the beliefs the movement stood for:

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
14/10/11	00:00	cocoaluvr Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.--- Martin Luther King, Jr. #OWS #Occupytheworld
14/10/11	08:43	rebmoti In case you need reminding why we need #ows, look at p1 story in kcstar re financial woes of municipalities. The $$ went to the 1%.
14/10/11	09:12	ZenYogaSteve Stay strong, #ows! They cannot clean up our discontent with brooms.
15/10/11	07:48	Journotopia Seneca "It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that they are difficult." #OWS
15/10/11	19:27	JohnTweedale #OWS Stay strong everyone, and above all, stay peaceful, it's your RIGHT to protest and they cannot take that away it's in our constitution
15/10/11	19:31	JohnTweedale #OWS Apparently they can arrest people for protesting, and closing your bank account, let us beg to differ, and fight back against this!
27/10/11	07:44	firefire100 #ows All seven & we'll watch them fall. They'll stand in the way of love & we will smoke them all with an intellect & a savoir faire O(+>
27/10/11	11:17	kristianb21 "If we all come together, they can never divide ONE!" #ows #occupyearth #occupytogether
27/10/11	18:17	RonPaulsVoice Liberty, freedom & self-determination. Those goals are as worthy of our attention today as they were 235 years ago #OccupyWallstreet #OWS
11/11/11	11:51	doperun "I am not not among those who fear the people. They, and not the rich, are our dependence for continued freedom." - Thomas Jefferson #OWS
11/11/11	14:59	breakfstinbeard Gandhi told us evil men & regimes arise throughout history, but they have always been toppled. Think of it. ALWAYS. #OWS #p21 #OO #occupyCAL

Table 53: A sample of tweets showing encouragement

Along the same lines, the stories expressing confidence in the movement enveloped around tweets showing full trust in OWS, believing in its powers, and relying on OWS to represent them in the world. These confidence stories were, at times, excessively bold and presumptuous, and this is what made them differ from stories of encouragement and of solidarity:

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
14/10/11	00:09	PTRAway I'm out! Tomorrow we get her back! America! xo #ows
14/10/11	00:10	kristengwynne Singing a little tom petty. “Heeyy baba! There ain't no easy way out...gonna stand our ground, no we won't back down” #ows
14/10/11	00:20	SFSexToy In 1776, the nation declared independence; in 2011 we will get it back. #Ows
15/10/11	11:31	krantzr Tools for building a global movement have never existed before. Now That they do we see the possibility of building something new. #Ows
15/10/11	12:44	denkerj1986 TheRealRoseanne you were right! They are saying that the number at #ows will reach 5k+ today, we WILL make a difference!
15/10/11	21:03	ideasNmind tazshedevl #OWS~Too big to fail! Yes! :-) The #GOP knows this! #WeThePeople = America = #OWS They are us and we are them!
27/10/11	10:54	DontFedOnMe PrisonReformMvt No doubt they got a call from the White House on this. Obama, the underdog, is totally behind #OWS. Yes we can!
27/10/11	19:02	jon_proulx Occupy_USA of course they do, but beat us down and we come back twice as strong, witness #occupyoakland #ows #occupyboston and others.
03/11/11	21:45	OccupiedNa_Na We'll survive any obstacle they throw at us bc we've learned 2 value our voice & each other.We will never be complacent nor silent again #ows
03/11/11	23:38	NativeSonKY We called them a lazy generation, then #OWS showed us AND THE PRZ that they were ANYTHING BUT! #ConnectTheLeft #OccupyEverywhere #KYDem
11/11/11	12:35	WhirlwindWisdom Takes12Know markm1962 They always will-they seem to unite over rapacious Greed. But now we are fully Awake & more are waking! #OWS :-)

Table 54: A sample of tweets expressing confidence in the movement

The big statements that described the movement as ‘too big to fail’ and that spoke to people ‘never being complacent again’ were balanced by tweets giving advice to the movement and to the protesters. These were stories that tried to offer a guide for action or conduct, and contained information that was believed to be capable of helping the development and sustainability of the movement. Some of them asked supporters to call the NYPD officers or the Mayor’s offices to complain about how authorities dealt with the protesters. Others called for supporters to be calm until they knew more information, while another group offered advice about miscellaneous issues:

Date	Time	Tweet
14/10/11	00:21	kristeraxel Call 311 (or 212-NEW-YORK if you're out of town) and tell Bloomberg to support our right to assemble and to not interfere with #OWS. #fb
14/10/11	04:53	elliottjustin Advice to arrestees earlier: Avoid ambulance chasers, stick with the National Lawyers Guild- "they've been with us since the Red Scare" #ows
14/10/11	11:41	SHuehlefeld 1%Tactics:HotButtonTopics Don't fall 4 fighting each other UNIFY! Lets get a real democracy & THEN we can work on issues #OWS #OccupyHouston
15/10/11	17:54	Mr_Jack3 diceylee808 Wait until we know what happened inside the bank. If all they were doing is closing accounts, this can blow up. Just wait #ows
27/10/11	03:33	CandiedWalnuts #OWS Remember that cops ARE NOT the enemy. They're mindless dogs & we must hold who let them off their leash accountable. #OccupyOakland
27/10/11	09:40	Daphne748 Put aside partisanship embrace the best ideas regardless of where they come from then we can move America not left or right but forward #OWS
27/10/11	10:45	potatowaste It's not us versus the cops. Stay non-violent and they will be the ones that look bad for their treatment. #ows #occto #occupytogether
27/10/11	15:33	november5th Don't let police brutality distract us from why we started this. They're beating you so hard to move the talk away from inequality #ows
03/11/11	04:29	Shiftinthinking A divided house will surely fall! It is not us vs them! It is WE! Non-violence! Make them (cops) hate what they do! #ows #oo
11/11/11	21:04	LibertySqGA Press Cmon ppl. stop disrespecting ppl when they're speaking. we have to create a culture of respect. #ows #nycsc

Table 55: A sample of tweets giving advice to the movement and to the protesters

Advising OWS and the protesters on the ground was one of the main processes of Twitter's storytelling mechanisms. The security a screen offers, and the feeling of having a panoramic or panoptic view of the events unfolding on the ground, gave people the power and the opportunity to (sometimes falsely) believe that they could offer pieces of advice that were helpful to those on the ground. Advising on Twitter, however, at times worked as a pacifier to the protesters who were in Zuccotti Park, since twitterers would ask on-the-ground protesters to remain peaceful and to think more logically, before attempting action.

The fifth kind of story, stories of announcements, had its own positive dimension in the collective narrative space of the movement. These stories were short messages that guided people through what was occurring on the ground, asked for specific acts in favour of the movement, or requested information to pass it on to others:

Date	Time	Tweet
14/10/11	00:22	ericverlo Tents are needed for #OWS and #OccupyDenver because this movement needs to stop the system, not hector it until we lose energy & body temp.
14/10/11	05:31	lauradurkay Statement from owners of park read out - they are “satisfied with our cleaning”!!! #Ows
14/10/11	06:21	kristengwynne “We are starting our peaceful victory march right now”. They're asking some ppl to stay behind and keep cleaning! #Ows
15/10/11	18:38	kevinwalvarez Riot Police in Times Sq. They're not letting us leave. #Ows
15/10/11	19:17	tvstt Guy told us cop came in to warn tgi Fridays people that they will charge us with 16 horses #OWS
15/10/11	23:44	Anarchymous #NYPD are pushing us along, we flood into streets, and they use bullhorns to say “get off street” #occupywallstreet #ows #whosestreetsourst
27/10/11	16:01	bookpatrol “Update: Weβ€™re being told that the tents protecting our books are down, but they have not yet seized books” - latest from #owslibrary #ows
27/10/11	19:32	moment_um In Egypt tommorrow,they will march in Tahrir Sq in solidarity for our #OWS movements
27/10/11	22:56	SuicideGirls Can someone get H2O to our friends OccupyLA - food committee is reporting they are dangerously low & may not have any by the AM #OWS
03/11/11	19:13	DiceyTroop OK, back to GA! Direct Action just gave us a quick training, and they'll do more after GA if you want in. Highly recommend. #nycga #ows
03/11/11	21:09	jopauca My source is saying we need people to come down tonight & tomorrow to stay here. They also ask journalists to come down & stay. #Ows

Table 56: A sample of tweets doing announcements

Announcements acted as complimentary stories to the stories that offered advice. Similar to the advice stories, announcements worked within the bounds of the online in order to help the on-the-ground. These stories of announcement, however, were based on the circulation of information about things that were happening on the ground, or information transmission regarding the needs of the movement.

As in the traditional community format, there were also people who liked to question events and actions. They asked questions related to the movement factors that could influence or control the movement. In these tweets, users seemed to be uncertain about actions other actors imposed on OWS, considered some of the media coverage as questionable, or hesitated to believe something that had spread through social media or mainstream media:

Date	Time	Tweet
14/10/11	00:10	tummler10 .MikeBloomberg: tell us whose rights #OccupyWallSt are infringing? #OWS
14/10/11	00:17	WATMAB We support dissent with billions of dollars in other countries but suppress it in our own. #OWS
14/10/11	22:30	Zoocritter Funny that we send journalists & photographers to occupations in other countries & they're not attacked by the police. #OWS
15/10/11	00:39	rxmoona I dont get police being violent at #OWS or any #occupyevent-Don't they know we protest on their behalf as well? Am I wrong? Police=99% too
15/10/11	10:48	Lithlad The protests in the Arab World went on for months. Let's face it, they have a lot of time on their hands. More time than we do. #OWS
15/10/11	22:59	RecruitWallSt If law enforcement scrutinized the financial community as much as they do protestors, we would not be in this economic mess. #ows
27/10/11	05:39	UrbanSquirrel #ows is angry, and most of us understand the anger. The problem is they are trusting the same people who created the monster to stop it.
27/10/11	13:26	andysmart777 FWIW, wouldn't a #GeneralStrike be self defeating since we all want jobs? I wouldn't want working people to lose the little they have? #ows
27/10/11	13:36	davidgraeber What do we have to do to convince the media that cops systematically lie when they say protestors threw things at them? #scottolsen #ows
03/11/11	00:09	agent_chaos Are they trying to squeeze out the cities who #occupy? How can we get more 2nd & 3rd tier supporters to get involved? #needsolutions #ows
03/11/11	02:04	JudahJames Who gave these psychotic cops a gun? Who holds their leash? Why do they attack us? How many more victims will we allow? #OccupyOakland #OWS
11/11/11	08:00	hollyannbb Pres. Obama when you honor the Veterans today, do you realize they are getting the crap beat out of them by our own Police force??#OWS #99%

Table 57: A sample of tweets questioning events and actions

These questioning stories offer a glimpse into how people seemed to explain their lives in connection to the movement, and they show the reasons they took certain decisions while abandoning others. For example, a few of them compared OWS to the 'Arab World protest', or asked for solutions (#need[ed]solutions).

The protagonists of these stories show how other possibilities exist and how subjective each action of OWS was. First, questioning and doubting characteristics of the movement illustrates the processes that gave meaning to OWS, forming a more coherent narrative around particular actions of the movement. Second, this questioning reveals Twitter as the storytelling platform of the movement. However, as I have discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, comparing OWS with other social movements was not a useful tactic. The parallelisation of OWS with the *known* social movement culture may have further complicated the movement, thus creating even greater ambiguity, rather than making it more coherent. This constant questioning of actions and events revealed the dichotomising effect of OWS: the nurturing of a culture that was based on positioning 'us' versus 'them'.

The micro-narrative of 'us' versus 'them' (as shown in Table 58 below) and the micro-narrative of expressing demands were palpable in the collective identity stories, and dominated over other kinds of stories. The stories of 'us' versus 'them' were constructed through several ideas, opinions, and concepts that could form a list of demands for the OWS. They were essentially formed from the personal reasons people joined or supported this movement, and what this movement represented for them, which was presented as a collective idea.

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
14/10/11	11:17	melissaimpact #OWS is about taxation without representation. Right now the 99% is heavily taxed but our gov't is by and for the 1%.
14/10/11	17:01	cukaramakara #OWS To hurt the plutocrats we must boycott big corporations. Let's consume goods from our neighborhood store. Avoid giving money to the 1%
14/10/11	22:46	OldCrazyRay Free our politicians from $$$ pressure. "Money Out" Amendment. They would help us if they could get reelected. #OWS
15/10/11	09:49	saknama Politicians should only pay attention to what we the people vote on. Instead they only pay attention to big campaign donations. #Ows
15/10/11	19:57	kidtree To stop a war we must free the soldiers from slavery. Free the #nypd officers and all occupy police. They are US too. #occupy #OWS #change
15/10/11	20:56	How2Democracy We can probably all agree: To fix our problems, we either limit the Free Market or open up our Limited Democracy, so they balance. #ows #p2
27/10/11	06:06	AnonSikko at every occupation we should be talking about the General Strike on Nov 2 they cant ignore you if their machines come to a halt #ows
27/10/11	12:58	b_lo2bay i think bills going to congress should be brought to us to vote on. Maybe then they would care how we, as a nation, are educated #OWS
27/10/11	22:03	hondarallyer OWS protesters are not against people who make or have a lot of money. They are against the way corporations have hijacked our country. #OWS
03/11/11	10:10	LloydDoggettTX We must work to create jobs. But we mustn't forget those who need critical support while they search for one #ExtendUI #p2 #99ers #ows
03/11/11	18:23	sseham Imagine what could be done to poor communities in the U.S. if every year one they got the $3 billion we give in welfare to Israel. #ows
03/11/11	18:33	CAPAction AQ: we need to address racial and income inequality-they are intertwined in the US #ProgOnTap #OWS
11/11/11	10:30	an0nyc We refuse to let our children grow up in a world where they have to fear the govt. in their own homes. #ows is more then a movement.
11/11/11	10:50	RandyAW We elect millionaires to Congress yet we think they will put ALL Americans 1st in their considerations? Think that through #Getmoneyout #OWS
11/11/11	10:51	Viajera777 They put their lives on the line for the whims of the 1% come home to be thrown out like trash. Now we fight for them. #ows #veteransday

Table 58: A sample of tweets positioning OWS as 'us' and the rest as 'them'

Date	Time	Tweet
14/10/11	00:24	southsidedeauce The 1% seems to want us to have confrontation with the NYPD....Bloomberg wants to silence the #ows occupiers...
14/10/11	02:04	ckanal Memorable line from Zuccotti Park tonight: "No way they can arrest us all. There is strength in numbers." #ows
14/10/11	04:38	N8Nelson They evict us from our homes. They evict us from our parks. We will evict them from power. #OWS #OccupyDenver @OccupyDenver
15/10/11	05:41	earthlinksucks If I robbed someone I would go ro jail. When the banksters tank our economy, they get bigger and get bonuses. #Ows
15/10/11	08:01	StewieBusiness We're uniting peacefully & they don't like it. #Occupy our future! All over the world, we are one. 1% has worked hard to avoid this. #OWS
15/10/11	09:45	jessebeing they have stripped us of of our means for survival; then sold it back to us at a deathly cost. I will never go back. #ows #occupy @99percent
27/10/11	03:29	KoroshErfani If we are organized we would succeed, if not they would. #occupywallstreet #OWS
27/10/11	06:10	streicher187 Wow my Klout score dropped by 20 pts, guessing it's because I support #OWS they probably dropped all our scores
03/11/11	17:00	BPGulfLeak Truthfully, if they were ignoring us, allowing us to occupy with no resistance, i would wonder whether we were on the right track. #OWS
03/11/11	21:58	OBAMA_GAMES Face it folks. Obama is for the bankers and Wall Street. He gave them our money. Now they have more bribe money. @cspanwj #cspj #tcot #ows
03/11/11	22:11	RKNJL If they won't build our way out of this recession, we will! #Ows
11/11/11	05:23	MizCorbeau #OWS #occupytwitter They Have taken our money over and over and lied and promised with false hopes and no they will resolve
11/11/11	22:08	OccupyGreed #ows Do we, the 99% sacrifice what we have now? Or wait to be sacrificed by the 1%? They DO NOT CARE. Multi-National Corps = Evil
11/11/11	22:14	Slave4Tools Death smiles at us all. Rangers smile back. As it smiles on the 1%, they will poo themselves, for fear of the potential judgement after #OWS

Table 59: A sample of tweets showing the demands of OWS as told by collective stories

These stories, both the stories of expressing demands and the stories of 'us' versus 'them' (Tables 58 and 59 respectively) presented OWS supporters on Twitter as a coherent group against other groups of people. For the supporters of OWS, setting themselves apart as a team created a bond or a shared goal of collaboration, and of respect for what they were standing for, but also of what they were standing against. These stories formed one of the biggest themes of the identity narrative, functioning as one of the core elements of the movement, and positioning OWS against the current system of affairs. This functional culture used expressive and symbolic language, first, as an effort to keep the community coherent and attract more participants; and second, in order to curtail divisions between the group. It thus relied a lot on defining OWS as distinct from definitions of the *status quo*. With a division between 'them' (the Obama administration, the 1%, police, Wall Street, Twitter, mainstream media, between others) and 'us' (the protesters and their supporters), OWS' collective stories were formed, preserved, and transmitted through Twitter, not because they were only based on an experience shared by all — on the ground or on Twitter — but because they

were based on narratives of antagonism that were told over and over again, through the same identity grammars.

The division between 'us' and 'them', the calls for people to tweet about the movement, and the almost constant broadcasting of what was happening on the ground, unveiled a social media platform that isolated the idea of the flitting protest. In doing so, it demolished the interpretations of protests as enclosed in their physical presence. To put it differently, Twitter in the case of OWS, demonstrated to some degree that the concept of physical space was not always integral to the collective experience of the protest. What you tweeted about did not depend entirely on where you were and when, even though for those live events that were live-tweeted users needed to be on the ground witnessing them. This is not to say that before social media people believed that one could only relate to something if it was represented on the ground. However, the perspective through which a protest community or a social movement was seen in the past was widely based on their physical representation. Every protest or social movement nowadays still has, and *needs* to have, a physical presence, as we have seen from the multiple Occupy movements. Yet social media now offer an additional tool, allowing the movement to be further sustained and augmented.

In sum, and before moving into the analysis of personal stories, I would argue that this engagement of individuals tweeting under collective pronouns, and expressing thus collective meanings of identity, illustrates the construction of a new kind of engaged citizen. Social media—and more particularly Twitter—demonstrate that the physical does not form 'the community' in the traditional sense of a community anymore, but rather the community is also empowered and enhanced through the number of users who set themselves as part of the discussion on platforms such as Twitter. Adding to the discussion on Twitter automatically made twitterers feel part of a community. Most of these tweets can therefore, be described as representing a collective action that is fluid, characterised by its speed and by its trait of bringing

personal narratives and the experiences of the movement's members together in such ways that the links between them were much looser than they had previously been for past social movements, which took longer to develop. These loose ties give birth to bursts of action that could have immediate results, thus transforming politics into 'an expression of personal hopes, lifestyles, and grievances' (734). This section, however, has shown that it is important to identify the dynamics that enabled movements to solidify around collective concerns, since collective expressions sometimes lead to inverse dichotomising conditions *between* the community and *with* the rest of the world. I argue that to trace these dynamics we need to identify both the personal and the collective as equal parts of a shared multifaceted identity for contemporary social movements.

In this environment, the rapport and the struggle of OWS' collective identity was firmly debated and the collective identity grammar took up two storytelling purposes. First, it integrated diverse experiences, instead of surrendering to the restricting and restricted patterns of 'collective identity'. Instead of enclosing OWS in the conventional norms of collective identity, the stories of OWS' supporters on Twitter were unveiled as telling stories that imagined a community (Anderson, 1991), one which did not entirely depend on a homogeneous collective identity, but was instead linked to stories of we-ness, announcements and demands. Second, the telling of these stories held together and cultivated loosely connected, heterogeneous, still to-some-degree connected shared stories, that formed a different kind of collective identity. Social media storytelling does important identity work, since it escapes from being dictated by dominant narratives of collective identity meanings and moves into incorporating the personal micro-narrative I will talk about in the following section.

8.3 More than 'us' makes a crowd, but including 'me' tells a better story

This thesis, and this chapter in particular, has argued that OWS' identity was

based on narratives of both the personal and the collective and assumed its character from dissatisfaction with the current form of life, and the hopes and aspirations of those involved for a new structure or system of living. By tweeting on their OWS experiences, ideas and identifications, original-posters used Twitter to endorse their perceptions of the community and of the self. Their stories expressed what it meant to be individuals, and at the same time part of a group, which protested against social and economic inequality, and aimed to make the economic structure and power relations in society fairer.

Communication on Twitter has already been theorised as the inauguration of an ambiguous identity development process for social movements (Gerbaudo and Trére, 2015; Kavada, 2015; Papacharissi, 2015). In this hybrid space, the movement infuses with the lives of the people who formed it by also establishing a venue for people who did not have a physical presence in the movement to express themselves in connection to OWS. Here I take a step further by arguing that the hybrid space of Twitter has bred an ambiguous collective identity that advances from collective concepts, towards looser processes that depend on both collective and personal stories. This section will hence look into these personal stories, and argue that they work together with the collective stories to form a shared multifaceted identity for the movement.

In the days between the 6th of October to the 14th of November 2011 there was an average of 3,033 personal stories tweeted per day (Figure 37, p.291). Personal stories fluctuated in the first week and rose steadily from the 10th of November, the 11th, 14th and 15th, before dipping again on the 20th. The narrative started to rise again on the 23rd, the 27th of October, and the 3rd of November. Similar to the collective narrative, I focus on the 14th, 15th, and the 27th of October, and the 3th and 11th of November to examine the personal identity micro-narrative.

A number of themes emerged in the stories, which formed and extended the

personal identity micro-narrative of OWS' Twitter story. After the detailed discourse analysis of those five days, seven dominant themes of stories (n=7319) were detected and those will be discussed further in this section. As Figure 38 below shows, 37% (n=2,708) of the tweets using the pronouns 'I', 'me', or 'mine' during these five days configured a personal identity by empathising with OWS, 29% (n=2,122) by internalising their position in connection to the movement, 11% (n= 805) by proposing recommendations that could work in favour of OWS, 9% (n=658) by receiving and broadcasting information, 8% (n=585) by valuing the importance of OWS, another 3% (n=221) by calling people to be involved or act in order to help the movement, and the last 3% (n=220) by questioning events and actions that came to contradict power structures surrounding the movement. Debating the issues surrounding OWS had great influence on the ways in which users discussed themselves as individuals. Thus, in the process of expressing their arguments and positions to OWS, twitterers expressed at the same time their personal identity.

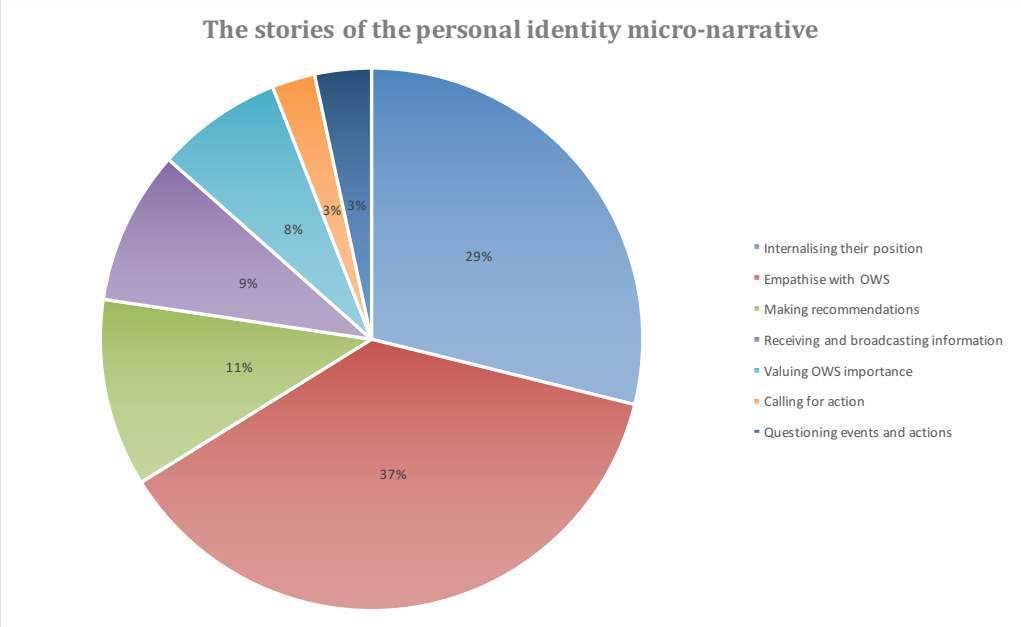


Figure 40: The themes of stories forming the personal identity narrative of OWS

Figure 41 below offers a closer look into the ways in which the seven

dominating micro-narratives are distributed during the five days in question. As we can see, empathising with OWS governed throughout all the days in question, and there is a general balance between the rest of the micro-narratives forming the personal identity narrative. Since 56% of the tweets were either empathising with the movement or internalising their position in relation to OWS, I argue that the personal identity narrative was very much reliant on affective expressions of identity. That is to say that users expressed themselves in language and stories that sourced from their feelings. Of course that does not mean that proposing recommendations, receiving and broadcasting information, valuing the movement's importance, calling people to be involved, or questioning events and actions were not expressed through feelings. As Papacharissi (2015) suggests in her book 'Affective Publics', almost all communication on social media platforms, especially Twitter, can be considered to be affective. I should note here though that the first two popular micro-narratives relied much more on feelings of commitment to the movement, rather than on objective approaches or justifying processes, as the other five had.

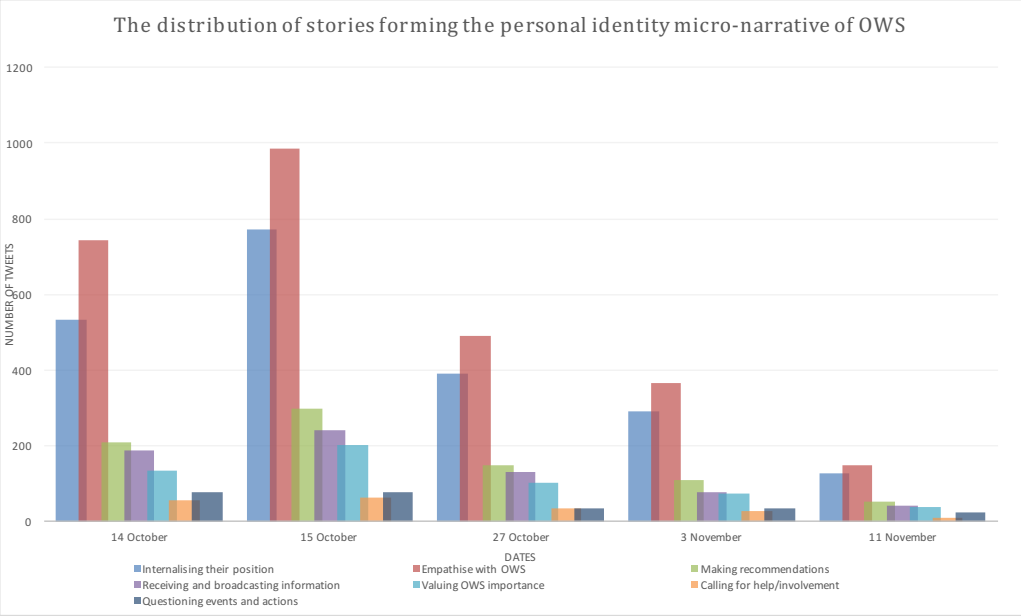


Figure 41: The distribution of stories forming the personal identity micro-narrative of OWS during the five most active days of the micro-narrative

Similar to the collective identity micro-narrative, the personal identity micro-narrative's distribution remained stable throughout the five more active days of these kinds of stories on Twitter. The discursive analysis of the personal stories has shown that they form an over-arching identity micro-narrative that does not necessarily depend on live events, but rather rises *during* live events. This exists in direct contrast to the narratives of mainstream media reactions and the narratives *of* and *against* violence, since the micro-narratives constructing the previous narratives I have looked into depended almost entirely on live events, and were dominated by different micro-narratives according to the stage the movement was at and the specificity of the event taking place. The identity narrative of OWS, however, told a different story.

I will now unpack that story by looking into what themes of stories formed the micro-narrative of personal identity, discussing what these stories mean, and how they compare with the stories of collective identity on Twitter. Finally, I will suggest how our access to this mixed mode of personal-collective identity narrative may affect the definitions we give to the identities of contemporary movements such as OWS.

Not only did personal stories dominate the OP tweets but they also had considerably more tweets than the collective narrative stories. This is important to stress and keep in mind during the discussion of the data that follows since it will influence the dynamics between collective and personal stories. As Figures 40 and 42 demonstrated above, most of the tweets with personal stories showed empathy for OWS. This empathy ranged from expressions of love towards OWS, the happiness people felt at being part of the movement, and their wish to be there and join the protesters at Zuccotti Park. These were also stories that communicated their support towards the movement, their hopes for the future of OWS, showed appreciation towards the protesters, and expressed different forms of solidarity with all involved. A sample of the solidarity stories can be found in Table 60 below:

Date	Time	Tweet
14/10/11	00:31	K_isanasshole Dear #OWS. dear New York. Dear Liberty Plaza. I love you. And will stand to defend you & your rights. #internationallawyers
14/10/11	09:34	LilianaSegura Really moved by reports from #OWS this morning. Wish I'd been there. To those who went to defend this space: you're badass and give me hope.
14/10/11	14:09	OHLMK I am ridiculously happy today. The women's event yesterday & the #ows victory this morning have me in fine fighting spirits. #Hopeandchange
15/10/11	04:53	TedShield I started to doubt people's ability to wake up to the corruption. I was wrong :) TPUWNBD #ows #occupywallstreet #15O #150 #occupytheworld
15/10/11	10:32	FoSheeki I wish I could take part in #OWS but I guess I'll just blog bout it
15/10/11	16:44	hector_mvg I hadn't read a lot about Occupy Wall Street... Now that I have. I support the movement. #OWS
27/10/11	01:04	smoothlou Would you strike in support of #ows? I feel like our grandparents would have. Hell, I'd do it if I had a job.
27/10/11	09:22	molliemarena I hope #ows gets somewhere without the violence. I hope the protestors never give up. With them in spirit.
27/10/11	18:08	re_jones To me #ows is about disenfranchisement via poverty. The protests are getting media attn to try to regain a voice in politics. I support them
03/11/11	10:33	thecitizen blogdiva awesome...so proud of #ows I love Hedges and Dr. West. #Heroes
03/11/11	13:31	progressnow1 Just got back from Court, can't explain how proud I am to represent #OWS protesters. Over 90% going to trial, other 10% took ACD's
03/11/11	20:19	jmcaninch68 As a 60s Protestor, I never dreamed we wd have to do this again: but we do--and I am so proud of young & older working 4 justice. #ows #p2
11/11/11	00:00	Beglitched_news It's hard to sleep when you know people are getting beaten by cops... Call me crazy. #Ows
11/11/11	15:39	KrutSheiber Let my first tweet: I support #OWS, am part of the #99percent, believe in inalienable freedoms and rights. I am not to be labeled like meat.
11/11/11	18:43	stevesmithis Stopped down at #ows to say hello, ended up working triage and getting fed. I love these people.

Table 60: A sample of the solidarity stories part of the micro-narrative of personal identity

Having seen this solidarity unfolding on Twitter, one could also argue that it was an attempt to draw people to Zuccotti Park. Twitterers, by expressing their identification with the movement on Twitter, strived to attract their followers and friends to the movement's values, and defined solidarity through their own experiences and personal struggles. Some believed in the values of the movement, the values of 'freedom and rights'. Others expressed their happiness, love, and pride for the movement that was fighting against the system; while others expressed their worries about whether the protesters were safe from the police. Solidarity is expressed in a lot of ways here, but it is particular in the sense that the personal experience comes into focus. Some solidarity stories managed to persuade and recruit others beyond the boundaries of OWS, while other stories were directed at those who were already part of the movement, to bolster their community feelings in the face of personal cost.

My analysis suggests that by showing solidarity on Twitter, the movement's

meaning was not only found in what it primarily aimed to do — disrupt the *status quo* — but it was also hiding in what it eventually became. The meaning of the movement not only lay in what it uniquely protested against, but also in what it uniquely became. Yet, a question remains. How was its unique existence judged and defined in our culture? It was defined as a movement whose value depended on the social media engagement and mainstream media reports it brought up, the disruption of the status quo, the building of solidarity between the on-the-ground and the online, as well as the creation of hybrid protest identities.

The introduction of social media into the organisation and practices of social movements have changed the way activists and their supporters see movements online and their roles in connection to the movement. Communication and social media engagement came to mean something different to them than other uses of these mediums. Indeed, this was almost instantly reflected in their use of these platforms. This was also present in the ways in which they valued OWS, by either identifying with it as part of the 99%, or saying how much the movement inspired them personally:

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
14/10/11	00:10	bobissilent To all you who believe that the #OWS protests need to end, think again. I'm not a part of the protests, but I side with the other #99%
14/10/11	04:53	LolliDama juliancastle NatShupe I studied hard. I worked hard. I am the 99%. I want my gov't free from corporate purchase. #ows
14/10/11	05:55	mrellisleetoo Goal today: inspire three students to join me #OWS this afternoon. This *is* change!!!
14/10/11	10:44	JKenTin Stand strong, comrades. #ows You all inspire me to get out there and add a voice!
15/10/11	06:54	TonyDeCarlo84 Hello #WallSt, I'm from the 99% and I want my country back. #ows #occupywallstreet
15/10/11	12:47	QueenofSpain I'm with you all in spirit. I am disabled. I am the 99%. And I THANK YOU for standing up for ME and mine. #Ows
15/10/11	19:11	_Some_Lady I Support #ows. I am the #99Percent.
27/10/11	14:50	KellyIwansky #ows - I am the 99%!!!
27/10/11	16:15	Sanlin These are simply two more reasons why I am so proud to support the global #OWS / 99% movement to put people/planet over profits and poison!
27/10/11	20:54	wisocialworker I am inspired when I keep reading of #ows #occupyeverywhere episodes where homeless citizens are welcomed to be participants. Hope.
03/11/11	17:36	tpstigers I am the 99%. I am also a middle-class white American male. I'm not particularly proud of any of these things. #OWS
03/11/11	22:03	ThePrez55 Because you should strive to earn, not strive to be given. I am the 99%. #OWS #tcot #GOP
03/11/11	22:18	KitOConnell FrecklesLikesIt I have mostly focused on personal/sexual politics before #ows. It's been a long time since anything national inspired me.

Table 61: A sample of tweets showing users valuing the movement

In a world where people spend more and more time online, turning their once solely analogue lives into hypersocial, hyperreal lives (Baudrillard, 1988), the movement managed to enter each user's personal device and their surroundings, changing their behaviours. OWS infiltrated their personal space. It became part of their everyday life. It lent its meaning to each individual's meaning. Because of Twitter, the movement surrendered itself to the personal, instead of the personal being surrendered to the collective notion of the movement. When the feeling of belonging entered Twitter's sphere, users felt the need and the inclination to express their identification with the movement, thus portraying how much significance the values of the movement had for them personally, and how much the movement inspired them.

Some of them felt so close to the movement that they considered it necessary to make recommendations to the movement and to the protesters. These recommendations came in the form of advice, guidance, instructions about what steps to take, suggestions on how to improve OWS, warnings about the direction the movement was taking, and its problematic structure:

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
14/10/11	10:39	RocheDen AlecBaldwin I disagree. GREED is the problem. Using wealth to buy gov't is a symptom. Gov't needs to protect the 99%. #Ows
14/10/11	14:26	OWS_Live #needsoftheoccupiers A new laptop to continue video editing, livestream and social media. :(Group of protesters destroyed mine #OWS
14/10/11	19:50	Wynner4Life MayFlowerBloom The movement just needs to clarify its demands. I believe it's only a matter of time before #OWS puts a plan forward
15/10/11	07:29	vulgrin However I do think #OWS needs to shift focus from "the rich" to reforming the election and political system to remove moneys influence.
15/10/11	12:55	delibernation A question for #OccupyWallSt #OWS organizers -- WHY are we not organizing an #OccupyKstreet event? Seems to me lobbyists need to be nailed.
15/10/11	18:05	Aremay The main problem #OWS has as far as I can see is it's lack of policy solutions. The political leadership needs to lead and develop some.
27/10/11	05:54	djmer1 What you need is guidence. It will come from..... #Occupymelb #OWS #Occupywallstreet I can tell you where it weill come from. THINK!!
27/10/11	08:00	Uncucumbered We need to find ourselves a whole bunch of Elizabeth Warrens. I wonder where the fat cats have them hidden? #ows #p2
27/10/11	08:28	Pete_TheKiller Proposal: I suggest that EVERYBODY adopt The #GeneralStrike avatar, between now & #Nov2, to promote #Solidarity. #OWS #OccupyOakland #USA
03/11/11	00:55	BlueTrooth #OWS needs to flush out the Anarchists. I can only stay neutral so long...#justsayin #truth
03/11/11	08:32	jvmadden Okay I think the OWS movement needs some focus and getting away from looking like a mob. #OWS + violence = negative appeal. Don't be coopted
03/11/11	10:20	MariaNYC These violent factions CANNOT be part of #OWS. I have the feeling they R being infiltrated. #OWS - Get IDs please!
11/11/11	11:36	Nothing_Is_New GigiAUT I don't see any other solution to our current situation. We need a restructuring. #Ows

Table 62: A sample of tweets expressing recommendations to the movement

Treading on the same path, the second most popular theme of stories was preoccupied with people who were internalising their ideas and opinions about the movement. These were users who were still showing a degree of support and empathy for the movement, but were also on the fence regarding identifying themselves completely as in-line with the movement. Similar to the questioning stories in the collective narrative, they showed support for the movement by keeping up with the movement, but they were less affective than the solidarity tweets, and focused on smaller acts of solidarity; watching OWS from afar, expressing their doubts and hesitations, but also their optimism:

Date	*Time*	*Tweet*
14/10/11	02:25	jbrkam Something just clicked w me about #ows... I'm not sure what it is, but its #fallbreak at AU so I think Ill go home to NYC and see for myself
14/10/11	04:06	Americassoul #OWS I believe the pressure on you is being made BECAUSE more and more ppl IN OTHER NATIONS ARE JOINING your protest DECRYING same issues!
14/10/11	04:36	akemi99 I'm not an activist at all but I need to see #ows
15/10/11	07:17	ArtsySquirrel I have to work. My heart is with #OWS. I am pausing on the :15 of every hour for silent prayer, joining you with positive thoughts.
15/10/11	10:27	carolann3888 October 15, 2011: Occupy Wall Street goes global and synchronized today. I am there in Spirit. #Ows
15/10/11	14:14	travyeso Well, I've tweeted about what I think the next phase of #ows is. But I think things are unfolding as they should. Now its about waiting.
15/10/11	18:21	brite_eyed I am soooo torn. Not with my beliefs, those are unchanged. Can action be taken? Don't know. Yet, I do know what needs to be done: #ows.
27/10/11	09:58	jackie_singh davienthemoose I completely understand this. For that reason I am more on the “support #OWS” than “demean #OWS”. However, debt plays a role
27/10/11	12:39	regibaby67 I still believe it all happened the way it was supposed to. I still have my dream. I hope you still have yours. We only need patience. #OWS
27/10/11	17:14	onekybabydoll I May Disagree On Some Of The Issues,but I Still Respect The Presidency,Some need to Remember This No Matter..#OWS :)
03/11/11	15:57	MissDarlingXOXO steafandubh U R confused w/ what I am saying. I want us protestors to stop others from being violent & vandalizing. It hurts #ows movement.
03/11/11	18:12	ckboss I'm tired and I don't know who to believe anymore #OWS
03/11/11	21:28	LM_author If I wanted to exonerate the criminal fraud and excesses of Wall Street paper pushers, I think #OWS would be the best way to accomplish it!
11/11/11	12:42	elleceemedic Ok, #OWS people who think I'm a sellout.I do agree with you,but can't campout indefinitely. I have bills to pay. #RealLifeSh*t
11/11/11	12:50	zacksholem marykvalle intrigue is good, I think? yes, I support the general idea of #OWS and occupybaltimore - all details, prob not 100%
11/11/11	23:39	EdFocus We have lots of work to do! But I am encouraged by #OWS.

Table 63: A sample of tweets showing users internalising their positions

Personal identity storytelling through the use of single personal pronouns on

Twitter became a collective activity in which individuals contributed to the telling, retelling, and remixing of stories. The devotion of people engaging affectively with a movement on Twitter ultimately depended upon the idea that since a lot of people talked about the movement on Twitter, everyone else should also place themselves in favour of or in opposition against the movement.

We know — and the tweets also show — that the majority of New Yorkers did not visit Zuccotti Park. The majority took it as a given that the park was the base for activists or people who knew everything about the movement and thus excluded them. Twitter hence became the substitute for what OWS gained when it stopped being defined as a purely activist movement (Bennett and Segerberg, 2016). Twitter's function became somewhat *nostalgic*. If the movement was no longer unique and exclusive to activists, then the movement had to be made so, and Twitter was the tool that afforded this nostalgic feeling. Indeed, people who were not completely sure about the movement's values or did not like specific parts of the movement's story, could still identify with it, without completely dedicating their Twitter accounts, their time, and effort in OWS functions. Twitter worked for them as the mechanism of partial participation, which was still effective and affective in a social media saturated world.

Indeed, this is precisely what the 3% of the personal micro-narrative illustrated more clearly. These stories expressed personal identity stories by questioning in an indirect way what was happening, or what the role of the media and the authorities was, while others speculated curiously, finding actions of the police and of the authorities strange and surprising. Above all though, they tried to link the movement with what they already knew: the 'civil rights movement', the 1968 protests, or the 1999 Seattle WTO protests:

Date	Time	Tweet
14/10/11	05:43	rjanaepitts As I watch #OWS I wonder if this is the 2011 version of civil rights sit ins.
14/10/11	12:10	OWSLibertarian An honest question: what's the male-female ratio at your local Occupation? In most pictures, I see 7 guys to 1 girl! #OWS #The99Percent
14/10/11	16:31	McBlondeLand PLEASE tell me how it's possible that someone as smart as hardball_chris doesn't know that it is possible to break up the TBTF BANKS #OWS
15/10/11	08:05	JoshTroski Today the world gets occupied. I wonder if the media will pretend its not happening. #OWS #oct15
15/10/11	12:01	Cukemonga Still when I think of the road we're traveling on, I wonder what went wrong? I can't help it, I wonder what went wrong. #Ows
15/10/11	21:57	artaud23 #ows just can't believe the media is ignoring this... I guess we know who owns IOUSA
27/10/11	17:23	nachofiesta You mean to tell me that police in an American city teargassed, shot rubber bullets into a peaceful crowd & Obama hasn't seen footage?? #ows
03/11/11	16:01	FatmaNassar Is it just me or does everyone else notice that there isn't much media coverage for the events in #OWS and #OccupyOakland ?!
03/11/11	20:11	DaniGail40 Dear MSNBC: I dont give a rat's ass about Herman Cain! In case you didnt notice, there is a revolution happening! #Ows
03/11/11	21:51	cwcoxjr Please to be explaining to me why it's a problem that folks are standing around and camping outdoors? Responses seem irrational. #Ows

Table 64: A sample of tweets questioning and events and actions

Others took it upon themselves to inform and broadcast information they collected either from television, media articles, or online sources.[65] These personal stories came from people who identified themselves as the informants of the movement on Twitter, thus making sure that information they received regarding the movement got out. Some of them were on the ground, experiencing the movement physically. Others were using police scanners to track how the police were responding to the movement, while others watched livestreams and reported back to Twitter (as I have discussed extensively in Chapter 5). Others circulated information they received from the media. In this respect, their personal identity was tightly linked to the role of the info-user (Hermida, 2014) and was primarily attached to a strong desire to share and assist the protesters and the movement with reports and timely messages, as Table 65 below shows:

[65] These stories were beyond, and did not include, the links that were tweeted and retweeted during the movement's life.

Date	Time	Tweet
14/10/11	00:46	LucyKafanov Overheard at #OWS: “really hope I don't get arrested tomorrow its my sisters birthday.”
14/10/11	09:35	OccupyPdx Wow. Watching #OWS live and judging by the amount of times the mic is repeated it is incredibly big. I counted 4 repeats! Wonderful.
14/10/11	23:10	themaddestbird Overheard in a heated discussion about #OWS: “Either you care about other people, or you don’t”. THAT is why I will be at #occupywinnipeg
15/10/11	11:21	Zeina_Awad “From the #ArabSpring to the #American autumn, #AJE has done the best coverage” #OWS protester to me - how nice to hear!
15/10/11	15:27	TanaButler ahuntre I heard NYPD is arresting people for trying to withdraw their money from CitiBank. #Ows
15/10/11	17:28	BallerinaX Mounted police in NYC ? on livestream I heard chanting “get the horses out of here”. Not a situation to introduce horses #OWS
15/10/11	19:27	rubigodi Sounds like #ows is getting pretty crazy in NYC. If only I could watch some coverage on cable news... thought that's what I was paying for.
15/10/11	19:38	lawyer_chella watching live feed again from NY, I find this extremely riveting. #OWS Police vs protesters has now become people-to-people. For real.
27/10/11	09:06	Rocinante I'm watching #OWS videos and I am disgusted with the police. The govt. This country. I want to sacrifice all of this, I want to protest.
27/10/11	19:02	rosegoggles mediaite I am watching edshow wegoted right now with a lot of other people. What ratings? What polls? Polls are as fudged as polls. #Ows
27/10/11	23:10	thejhexp amandapalmer I just watched your Ukulele Anthem at #ows and now I have the most enormous, ridiculous grin on my head
03/11/11	21:27	BusterBNYC #OWS I have been hearing rumors also of a raid at Zucotti Park tonite or tomorrow. Stay classy and NO anarchist bullshit here in NYC!!

Table 65: A sample of tweets showing receiving and broadcasting information

The last 3% of the stories were more actively trying to pull people into the movement, calling for people to be involved or to act, and calling for help for the movement. They saw themselves as the megaphone that would bring in more support and would offer to the movement the encouragement that would partly broadcast what the movement was aiming to achieve. Yet, this last kind of stories essentially showed that they considered themselves as the influencers who would bring in the critical mass the movement needed to establish itself in a world dominated by the media and state power structures:

Date	Time	Tweet
14/10/11	00:28	LeeCamp At 6AM this morning I will be at #OccupyWallStreet to defend it from Bloomberg's eviction. Rain or shine. I hope you will join me. #OWS
14/10/11	03:51	notanothertree When others look to God, I look to Anonymous. Please help w/ #OccupyWallStreet we need your help. #OWS #PeopleOverProfit
14/10/11	18:44	IamNickyT Tomorrow I will be playing a show for free at 8 at the National Underground to support the #OWS...come celebrate and enjoy
15/10/11	10:49	Debbie858 Take Part in Union-Tribune “Tell Us About It& “survey. Call 619-293-2506 and press 1 for “Yes, I support the Occupy effort.” #OWS #Occupysd
15/10/11	13:39	mtracey Shot in the dark -- if anybody has an extra Droid battery (original) to donate, it would help me keep tweeting. #OWS
15/10/11	17:33	slangjannen Who want's 2 help to build such an online platform to document & organise #globalchange ? I do #agorabxl #occupyTogether #ows #o15 #15o #ows
15/10/11	19:03	melisheath “The best way to understand people is to listen to them.” -Ralph Nichols. Mayors across the US: “Can you hear me NOW?” #OWS #Occupy
27/10/11	16:01	kag823 Interested in helping organize a hat and scarf drive for #OWS anyone know if something like this already started? Pls put me in touch
03/11/11	17:20	Shiftinthinking If you don't know why you should support #ows then watch a documentary once in awhile! I will post a list of great ones...
03/11/11	20:30	justinstoned Looking for folks to help with #OccupyWallStreet's #OWS #Community #CoolHero Award concept. I got the celebs & basics but need more brains!
11/11/11	21:17	LibertySqGA Support: I would just ask people that if the process doesn't seem perfect, to just go through with it and stick to process #ows #nycsc

Table 66: A sample of tweets calling for people to be involved or act

I sum up these personal stories with an all-encompassing point: collective and personal stories do not exist on Twitter in isolation. As Kristeva (1960) and later Bakhtin (1981) stressed, language and communication are substantially dialogic, and have their roots in multiple voices, creating a polyphonic environment in which the individual’s voice is indistinguishably and intertextually bound to the voices of other people. Indeed, ‘every text has its meaning...in relation to other texts’ (Allen, 2006: 6). Therefore, I argue that the ‘I’ and the ‘we’ on Twitter are not two antagonistic entities, and that one cannot stand alone in a social structure such as Twitter’s, which is fundamentally created *for* and *through* interaction. By using Twitter, people communicate directly and indirectly with each other, creating a collective identity of ‘a multitude form’ for the movement which partly attributes its means of formation to the new participation practices taking place on Twitter (Hardt and Negri, 2011; Routledge et al., 2007).

This personal identity fed into the expression of a collective identity that was formed through the micro-narratives I discussed earlier, but was essentially structured through the same architectures and features as the collective

identity. To bring it back to MacIntyre's argument that narrative is the 'basic and essential genre for characterisation of human actions' (1984:208), narrative became the key and fundamental component of both the collective and the individual identity micro-narratives forming OWS on Twitter. However, MacIntyre goes on to add that 'the story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity' (1984:221). This works as an addition to Bruner's idea that there is a narrative link between individual and cultural identity in which culture can be defined:

> by the narrative models it makes available for describing the course of a life. And the tool kit of any culture is replete not only with a store of canonical life narratives (heroes, Marthas, tricksters, etc.), but with combinable formal constituents from which its members can construct their own life narratives (1987:15).

Given these positions, we can talk about the narrative character of OWS' identity on Twitter as the sum and substance of both its collective and personal stories. Therefore, I will draw on a number of complementary points, to bring the above analysis of personal and collective stories together. First, as I have mentioned earlier, I argue that both personal and collective identity are constructed through stories. By that I suggest that the narrative architecture of a personal identity on Twitter depends on the collective cultural narratives under which the story of that individual's experiences is conveyed on the platform. However, the personal characteristics of the individual identity are not eliminated, or assimilated into the collective, but are rather preserved in the story of the movement on the platform. I argue thus, that there is a different identity anatomy that outstrips singularities and idiosyncrasies on Twitter, which is the same that sustains personal identity (Bruner 1987; MacIntyre 1984; Rice 1992). Even if the story of an individual and the integrity of personal identity rely on the collective identity stories that compose the social media culture of OWS, these collective identity

stories are at the same time dependent on the existence of personal stories and personal identities.

8.4 There is more than one OWS identity —and that identity is real

To make sense of OWS' narratives and trace this social movement's identity, Twitter becomes the space where 'collective action is a "form" which by its very existence, the way it structures itself, delivers its message' (Melucci, 1989: 76). The concept of identity deployed here is not essentialist or traditional, but strategic and contextual. That is to say, the adopted concept of analysing OWS' identity does not advocate for a stable self or group that is unveiled from a specific beginning to an end, without any changes. As Poletta and Jasper (2001:285) argue, collective identity is

> an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. It is a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly, and it is distinct from personal identities, although it may form part of a personal identity.

In this collective identity framework, where both personal and collective identities construct OWS on Twitter, identity is not consolidated but is progressively fractured and fragmented, never exclusively unique and single but multiple. Indeed, it is formed through and with different, often converging and opposing discourses and practices. Identity here counts *on* the processes of transformation and constant change. Precisely *because* OWS' identities in this thesis are formed within Twitter's discourse, they need to be discussed and analysed as products of this platform's specific cultural and social site, with its specific discursive formations that are themselves constantly changing and adapting to technological changes.

Twitter's storytelling process, as social interaction, creates an affective environment for users who tweet under #OWS. Through identifying and 'co-

creating' the story of the movement on Twitter, the users construct a 'we' that is assembled through affect and a sense of solidarity: told and retold, 'my story about OWS' becomes 'our story about OWS'. These expanding identity narratives formed the ground on which the movement itself was spread and sustained on Twitter. Hence, the individual's identification with the group was not just a personal choice but a growing story that emerged from selecting which story to tell and with what narrative they chose to identify it with. Along the same lines, individual narratives tell what kind of morals the individual holds, their aspirations and motives (Poletta and Jasper, 2001). The moral space that is created around the #OWS personal narratives can therefore be considered as a process through which stories tell what is good, what is important, and what is meaningful for the movement. This process of deciphering and narrativising individual experience is definitely personal, but it is also influenced by the repertoire of stories available, and empowered through the movement's context. Through this, what becomes clear is that an individual's OWS identity cannot be detached from the bigger collective narratives of OWS, which express what is important to the movement. Personal OWS narratives do not have 'free' forms. They are influenced and are based on pre-existing narratives: from the ones the group projected from the beginning (e.g. we are the 99%) to the presumptive narratives of the movement (e.g. against police violence).

More specifically, the collective's identification as a movement and as a group emerges within the play of certain notions of group and community. Thus, it is more the product of opposing the Other, than a homage to a traditional notion of 'identity' which is an all-inclusive, coherent singular entity. Most importantly, OWS collective identity is constructed through what Derrida called différénce (1981). This calls for the realisation that it is only through our comparison with the Other, and the realisation of what the Other is not, that the 'positive' meaning of any term and indeed identity, can be formed (Derrida, 1981; Laclau, 1990; Butler, 1993). The coherence we look for in OWS' collective identity is in fact constructed within the discourse of

différénce, exclusion, and of community, and is the result of a process that stands against a number of Others: the police, the media, the 1% and the government. OWS needed to place itself in a negotiating position with the outsiders, projecting its identity to the public as against the status quo, in order to build a collective identity that would attract individuals that were affected by the financial crisis of 2008. Reflecting back on the ways these outsiders perceived and represented the movement, the group managed to create a process in which collective identity was more than a common goal, tactic, and identification. Rather, it extended towards an identity that stood against the ways in which it was treated by the police, the mainstream media, and the government.

This point is particularly important, as we cannot consider all of the people who tweet on the #OWS hashtag as members of the movement. In this sense, there should be a distinction between narratives *of* the movement and narratives *about* the movement. What we see on the #OWS hashtag is also a negotiation between insiders and outsiders of the movement about the movement's identity. Différénce exists and is obvious on Twitter when it comes to deciphering the narratives of the movement, which tell the collective identity story of the movement, and the narratives about—and sometimes against—the movement. In this liminal space in which collective identity and its counterpart exist, collectivity, fracture, and ambiguity create an amalgam in which OWS' identity is structured by both its stories of shared values *and* its adversarial stories. The key to distinguishing between the two—the stories *of* the movement from the stories *about* the movement—is to track the story of the movement from its origins.

If Twitter enables and encapsulates a new form of social space, one must understand that this does not provide a sense of closure for social movements, a final realisation of *telos* or dialectic move from social structure to anarchy. Within this new narrative space where political, social and cultural dissemination becomes feasible, and the actual level of sharing

practices is culturally driven and cross-culturally manifold, 'the rise of universality [comes] out of a particular lifeworld' (Žižek, 2008:129) and forms a space that affords social movement identities new possibilities of expansion, change, and development. As has been discussed here and seen in the long line of Occupy movements, today's uprisings no longer necessarily result from extensive background organisational preparations; neither do they produce just networks, structures, or visualisations of long ties. The tracing of social media immersed protests calls for an exploration of their *identity grammars* and constitutive elements through multiple disciplines, rather than relying on social movement theories, sociological concepts or network methodologies in order to make them available to social change.

In particular, I have highlighted identity micro-narratives and storytelling as essential dimensions of OWS supporters' activities, which were drawn on to express, connect, broadcast, and mobilise the members of the movement. I also identified the on-going rise of personal identity within collective notions of identity, as a real change in contentious social movements, such as OWS. Examining both the opportunities and vulnerabilities involved in identity storytelling on Twitter, I argue that OWS can be best seen as influencing the problematic balance between clarity and frailty, empowerment and uncertainty. Twitter hence allows the ambiguous political identity of OWS to be informed and strengthened through collective action.

This chapter has illustrated that Twitter was crucial in maintaining both a sense of personal expression and of community for OWS. The sharing of the affective stories that constructed the personal and collective narratives of identity became an activity that sustained, nourished, and deepened the relationships between Twitter supporters and activists (Papacharissi, 2014). I have argued that the importance of Twitter in the construction of OWS' identity narrative is not entirely technological. Twitter cannot and should not be defined as solely a technological device or as a precise collection of signifiers attached to one platform. Instead, I have proposed that it should be

described as a new space of communication flows that allows the world and events such as OWS to use it to tell their protest stories, thus creating a sense of 'togetherness and collectivity' (Papacharissi, 2011:58-62). Occupy Wall Street rose on Twitter as a collection of stories that explicitly demonstrated that 'technology is gradually becoming a second nature, a territory both external and internalised, and an object of desire' which we do not 'need to make transparent any longer, simply because it is not felt to be in contradiction to the "authenticity" of the experience' (Huhtamo, 1995: 159-160). Twitter, to some extent, produces and reproduces, stores away and conveys the movement's *identity grammars* through multiple storylines in a stable but also situation-transcendent space where it can be transferred and transmitted as a new form of multifaceted shared identity.

Social movements keep moving away from the restraints of a fixed collective identity, entering an ambiguity in which they retain a connection to collective notions through the physical occupation of spaces, their solidarity, their protest values and cultures. Some of those processes (and some new) ones are also enacted and portrayed on social media platforms such as Twitter. Social movements, therefore, can even more now than in the past, be conceptualised through qualities where digital space becomes a culture, a scene of ideas where sharing interpersonal sentiments without physical proximity is realised (Anderson, 2006; Bender, 1978; Calhoun, 1980:105-129). Through narrative analysis, tweets as a new kind of everyday, interactive story, have disclosed new concepts for narrative functions and architectures for collective identity.

This power of stories, argues Polletta (2006), comes from 'their allusiveness, indeed, their ambiguity' (33). Furthermore, she underlines two analytical tasks that need to be followed in order to understand such stories in political contexts. 'One is to identify the features of narrative that allow it to achieve a certain rhetorical effect. The other is to identify the social conditions in which those rhetorical effects are likely to be politically consequential' (2006:166).

In the OWS case, the political dimensions are apparent: people stood against the economic, cultural, and social structures. The features of narrative that allowed OWS to be rhetorical lay in its multifaceted identity. As one of my interviewees, who was involved in activist movements for more than five months acknowledged:

> Despite Occupy presenting itself with all these memes and slogans and talking points as being one unifying thing, there was this wider ray of opinion and thought within the park. We were different and same, at the same time.
>
> Shawn, 34, teacher

In view of this, we should draw on the importance of the relationship between sociology, culture, and social movements. The popularity of identity-aligned social movements emanates from their function in creating different notions of individual and collective identities, specifically during a time in which bigger frames such as nations and governments have to some compelling extent, lost their ability to adequately create trustworthy structures.[66] Twitter succeeded in curtailing this by providing to OWS' supporters alternative spaces to make sense of them and to identify with OWS. Their stories, whether personal or collective, furthered the formation of a shared multifaceted identity and the social affiliations that materialised their identity, allowing intrinsic individual identities to remain viable and attainable.

Social media means of communication are usually referred to as unproductive means of political communication and of sociality (Turkle, 2015), while sometimes their users use them in different ways than the ways in which they were meant to be used when they were first created. This thesis argues that the modern means of communication have succeeded in throwing out the idea of a social movement as just a physical occupation.

[66] See for example the growing disillusionment with politics and elections in the 2016 Presidential campaign

Social movements have become popular and have entered everyday discourse. Through social movements' use of social media, they have managed to envelop us in the same way as language has. They are now part of the mainstream discourses of communication and interaction, succeeding through these in creating identities that are neither exclusively personal nor collective.

This new language of social movements eventually creates a new kind of shared multifaceted identity. These experiences were both personal and collective, allowing people to become active actors of meaning in the movement's stories, even if their activity was translated as social media engagement or/and physical protest. The collected tweets this thesis has analysed formed stories and narratives of collective identity; of the struggles and successes experienced by the many individuals whose lives were influenced by the movement. By appealing to and exploring the processes through which theses stories were told through social media storytelling, Twitter offers us a glimpse into the voice of this community and specifically of those who identified with or stood against the movement, while creating and affirming a collective identity that exists somewhere between solidarity and adversity. However, what makes OWS' collective identity storytelling on Twitter unique and a significant contribution to the growing literature that looks into social media and social movements, is the way in which it enables us to look into the process. In other words, it enables us to examine the narrative dynamics between the movement's participants/activists/supporters collective identity and the subversive stories told by their adversaries, placed between and with those stories of support. This interpretation of collective identity storytelling results in collective narratives that challenge and redraw the boundaries of traditional collective identity storytelling and collective identity in general, presenting it as a storytelling process rather than a consolidated and stable entity.

Realising that social movements no longer exist as they once did, and that in their place there is a language of social media content, populated with text,

images, videos and the amplification that comes with their mediums of communication, the whole meaning of collective identity changes. What counts now is who will use that language and for what reasons. This appertains to questions of authenticity, leadership, and organisation. One of the goals of this chapter was to show that what is really at stake is much larger. A people that is isolated from its own struggles is far less free to choose and act as a collective than one that has managed to situate itself in language and discourse, even if that discourse is Twitter. This is how and why the entire social media framework of social movements can now be considered as owning political dimensions.

9. Conclusion

In this thesis I engaged in a critical and evaluative discussion of social media storytelling for Occupy Wall Street's forty last days on the ground. In the framework of what is often presented as a network movement, I investigated the discursive construction of OWS' dominant narratives as they were structured through dynamic stories, micro-narratives, and narratives. The analysis has shed light on the ways in which the narratives forming the story of the movement on Twitter have largely shaped, and at times distorted, the significance and unique nature of the movement.

In Chapter 2 I addressed an existing *theoretical gap* in social movement research, regarding the role of stories in a movement's practices and processes. I suggested that a more comprehensive theory of the intersections between social media and social movements may be possible if we draw on the narrative traits of their social media stories. Consequently, I deployed 'narrative analysis' as the leading conceptual tool to explore OWS' stories on Twitter. This thesis therefore aimed at filling an *empirical gap* that exists in the field of social media and social movements research, by addressing social media data not just instrumentally, but also by offering qualitative analyses into the meanings these stories generate (cf. Gerbaudo and Treré, 2015). This thesis demonstrates that a partly quantitative and largely qualitative analysis of social media data can be used to reflect upon, refract, and shape a contemporary social movement's dynamics, and by extension, its politics. Platforms such as Twitter now have the power to influence the political and ideological elements of social movements and to generate discourses and narratives that also have the potential to exert influence upon the dynamics of social movements. This thesis thus addressed the research question put forward in the Introduction: *How does a movement express its story through interwoven narratives on Twitter; and what does the expression of these*

stories and the responses of participants, activists and adversaries to key events, tell us about the movement?

By looking into the stories and the micro-narratives those stories created, and then to the larger narratives composed of micro-narratives, I have argued that we can trace the ways in which OWS came to gain new meanings on both Twitter and in the world, through Narrative Thematic Analysis (NTA). I employed the original analytical framework of NTA as a framework for discourse analysis, which links quantitative and qualitative discussions together in one model. With this method, even a larger dataset can be made meaningful and can help scientists who deal with Big Data. Therefore, the importance of joining qualitative and quantitative methods is not just about making the qualitative into something legitimate, but to also help quantitative analysts understand meaning generated in the interactions of 'data subjects'. NTA can be used as a vehicle for re-imagining a shift in data-driven sociological research, from quantitative methods into mixed methodologies, which use both qualitative and quantitative methods.

This shift also supports the conscious attempt on my part to trace the narratives constructing OWS in such a way as to unveil the workings of Twitter for the movement. I suggest therefore a change in the methods we use to analyse social movements through social media data, and offer a *methodological contribution*. The benefits of using the six-step NTA analysis method, which divides the data into stories, micro-narratives, and narratives, is that it avoids relying on connotations that depend on just the 'narrative'. Instead, my method also covers the smaller elements that construct OWS: its social, cultural, and political contexts. Micro-narratives in this sense, reclassify the role of Twitter on OWS: its identity and discourses — between supporters, the platform, and the world — and the discourses that enact them on Twitter. My NTA approach treats social media stories as a method for studying social movements. The collection of OWS' narratives on Twitter and their subsequent analysis functions here as method for examining which

aspects of this particular movement can be approached and traced. By investigating these narratives, this thesis has shown how narrative analysis can extend and enhance our knowledge of a number of social movement features and social movement narratives. NTA, through narrative analysis, highlights cultural, social, and technological characteristics of OWS that are underplayed or neglected in other approaches. Thus, it highlights how key events—be they mainstream media reports, rapes at Zuccotti Park, or the eviction of OWS—are interpreted and thus create the groundwork for OWS' social media story. This new terminology constitutes another element of social movement research: the embeddedness or normalisation of social media in everyday life, and by extension, their role in the birth and lives of social media movements in the future.

This thesis traced the role of storytelling for OWS on Twitter by delving into five sub research questions:

1. What kinds of stories do people tell in connection to OWS on Twitter?
2. How do these stories change over time?
3. How do they form narratives that tell OWS' story?
4. How do specific events affect these narratives?
5. Do Twitter stories unveil different narrative linearities, characteristics, and identities for social movements?

Three characteristics of Twitter affordances proved to be particularly significant in unfolding the answers to these questions of social media narratives in the framework of OWS: Twitter as a live commentary pit, the ephemeral character of the platform, and the visibility it offers to political views, which I discussed in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 respectively. However, the construction of a shared collective identity also rested on the personal storytelling process of Twitter, mixing and creating in the meantime larger collective identity narratives, as discussed in Chapter 8. Additionally, four persistent themes that dominate social movement research, and stem from the research questions, informed the empirical analysis outlined in chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 respectively: social media networks stepping in place of

mainstream media's representation of social movements, Twitter abuse against individuals and groups on Twitter, the use of social media as an instantaneous storytelling tool against injustice, and collective identity as a process, rather than as a static element of social movements. The theoretical frameworks proposed in Chapters 2 and 3 informed these empirical chapters.

In Chapter 2 I suggested that OWS can be discussed through literature on social movements that has developed in three clusters: i) the complex socio-political context that the movement was placed in, ii) the expanding ties between social media and social movements, and, iii) the affects involved in networked communities. In Chapter 3, I noted that although narrative analysis had been applied to social movement research, this was not so extensive as to yield more comprehensive analytical insights. I therefore suggested a conceptual framework that deployed social media narrative analysis as a mode for unveiling the stories of OWS on Twitter. I argued that through emplotment, we can consider Twitter as a polyphonic commentary pit space governed by ephemerality, the hashtag as the narrator of the story, the platform as the storyteller, and the users as both the readers and authors of the movement's story. All of these form collective stories on Twitter that unveil dynamic narratives for OWS. Overall, these two bodies of literature highlight several aspects of the multifaceted interactions between social movements and social media. However, they have never been combined in a systematic way, and the literature is either focused on specific social movement characteristics or narrative structures. This fragmentation obscures the fact that social movements engage with social media in different ways, and casts a shadow over the dynamics behind social media immersed movements.

Thinking of OWS in context, it was a movement that was formed after the birth of the global economic crisis of 2008, which brought about significant changes beyond the economic sphere (Gerbaudo, 2012). Such a crisis can never be interpreted as simply a financial crisis; it was also, at its heart, a

social, cultural, and political crisis. The sociocultural aspects of this crisis facilitated and contributed to the rise of Occupy Wall Street, a movement that came to represent a number of concerns relating to the economic crisis and its origins in the USA. Upon realising that mainstream media was imposing a blackout, was biased against the movement, or was spreading misinformation, OWS' supporters took to social media, such as Twitter, to hijack the mainstream media discourses on OWS, and endeavoured to alter the ways in which the movement was talked about, and therefore interpreted by the public.

In Chapter 5, I drew on social and narrative theory, interviews and Twitter content, to make the case that this shift in the movement's representation included, but was not limited, to the following: 1) OWS turned to social media to build its own media ecology while at the same time its supporters on Twitter reacted negatively to mainstream media coverage that spread misinformation and misrepresented the movement; 2) the shift to the use of social media for OWS was also met by a shift in the ways they broadcasted social movement action when mainstream media were blocked from reporting on key events such as the eviction; 3) key events such as the eviction of the movement unveiled leading characters of the movement on Twitter; 4) the shift into livestreaming the eviction of the movement from Zuccotti Park transformed Twitter into a live commentary pit through which people felt compelled to describe what they were watching, and to add to the narratives against the NYPD-imposed blackout of the mainstream media. These micro-narratives of the movement's media ecology proved to be telling of the movement's *purpose* and *processes*. By starting the discussion of OWS' story from its 'end-point', the eviction, I reflected on what the movement came to finally *mean* for its supporters, by looking into the alternative ways Twitter was used during fast-paced and urgent events. At the same time, the blackout of mainstream media worked as the precursor to the following chapter about Twitter abuse against OWS.

Social movements have always come under scrutiny and been attacked by people who did not share their beliefs. What the social media representation of these aggressions reveal, as I discussed in Chapter 6, is that Twitter can make these reactions visible and tangible. These aggressions have underlined how commonplace such abusive reactions have become on Twitter and how abuse changes or influences social movements such as OWS during key moments. I argued, however, that even though Twitter is often presented and talked about as a medium for overt and uncontrolled abuse, when the discussion comes to social movement's narratives on the platform, abuse is not something completely new. Instead, aggressors on the platform appropriate past narratives of violence against social movements. Twitter, therefore, does not bring out abuse just by and of itself; it primarily makes that abuse visible. The visibility of the platform's content, however, works both ways, with some twitterers choosing to stand against it, using Twitter to confront aggressors. Yet again, by standing against the abuse, tweets of support unwillingly give larger visibility to the abuse. Eventually, the support stories decrease in number, while the abuse remains rather stable. This abuse was also found in other forms against OWS; more emphatically in the ways NYPD treated the protesters and their belongings during the eviction of the movement from Zuccotti Park.

Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to claim that OWS was treated violently and evacuated brutally, with commands communicated to the NYPD directly from Mayor Bloomberg and coordinated with other evictions in the USA and worldwide. Granted, similar police violence incidents against social movements have taken place in many parts of the Arab world in previous years, wherever dictatorial regimes had stepped in to stop people's protests and impose control over their populations. It was, however, one of the first times that these police practices were broadcasted through Twitter instantaneously in the USA. Therefore, the micro-narratives forming the narrative against police violence in Chapter 7 were stories related to: 'honouring the First Amendment', 'use of force', 'communication with

protesters' and 'arrests'. The micro-narratives that were constructed on Twitter have shown how the narrative against police violence during the eviction day of OWS from Zuccotti Park produced discourses on Twitter that stood in support of the movement and against police violence, giving Twitter a political role. Each story, each tweet, was a small political expression that also transformed Twitter's character into a political entity.

This political character of Twitter gave new meanings to the ways in which social media have transformed civic engagement. Twitter offers a different kind of political participation on social media from other ways of participating in social action, by virtue of the visibility of its content. The intertwined dimension of civic engagement and political visibility forms a story for the movement on Twitter that is political, personal, collective, and ephemeral. In this context, the core questions that arose on Twitter about the social tensions forming OWS depended upon and were enhanced by the ephemerality that characterises the platform. The final chapter of this thesis argued that Twitter produced a shared and manifold collective identity for the movement. This shared and manifold identity was supported by the hybrid space of Twitter, the blurring lines between physical and virtual spaces, the ambiguous political persuasions of OWS, and the affective dimensions of contemporary social movements, as I have described in Chapter 2.

Through co-creating the story of the movement on Twitter, users created a 'we' that drew on affective ties between them and a sense of solidarity. Told and retold, 'my tweet', 'my story', became 'our story'. The narratives created through these stories and their micro-narratives are the basis on which OWS' story on Twitter was created through personal and collective stories, allowing OWS supporters to come together and constitute, or reaffirm, themselves as a group with a common goal (MacIntyre, 1984). These social media narratives gave a coherence and guidance to the unfolding events on the ground, and helped structure and sustain a shared collective identity by composing shared

emotions of support and solidarity. OWS' story on Twitter became therefore, a storyfying process, where a continuous telling of stories, aiding, promoting, and directing the movement's identity and coherence, was enacted. In these collective identity narratives, OWS' Twitter community emerged from interaction, while simultaneously its constitutional narratives were embedded in personal and affective social structures.

I have demonstrated that Twitter stories compose discourses of new meanings for OWS. Along the same lines, scholars have argued for a move from the use of terms such as 'collective action' to terms such as 'connective action', to describe movements that rely on 'personalised content sharing across media networks' (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012). As a new line of research, this study calls upon a 'mixed-mode' relationship between online and on-the-ground settings and argues that social media networks are not virtual but are part of the everyday (Walther and Parks in Daly and Miller, 2002:530). In this thesis, ideas and claims about an approach that treats social movements as a set of narratives were refined, expanded and augmented, as the understanding of the role of narratives in OWS was developed. Interpreting OWS through the social media stories of its supporters was not an attempt to determine all elements of OWS' action: narratives do not replace 'frame analysis', 'mobilisation theory', or 'network analysis' of social movements, but stand alongside them and inform them. OWS' story on Twitter is traced as being structured by instantaneous behaviours, ephemeral responses and reactions, affect, collective identity, and above all, as discourse. Discourse shaped the movement's dynamic processes (e.g. reacting against police violence and mainstream media's coverage), action (e.g. finding new ways to broadcast the movement's events), and collective identity.

What this thesis has highlighted is that Twitter, and in general social media, are not independent from everyday life. Rather, they shape the events and stories that surround us. Social media have become part of our everyday

practices, where the online and the offline are connected. In this hybrid space, pervasive access to the internet and the influence of its processes make the dichotomy between online and real, problematic and trivial. However, this ambiguity of social movement narratives, as this thesis has illustrated, is not necessarily a bad thing. Social movements are immersed in ambiguous settings and for that reason they can, and will for years to come, produce new significations for contemporary social movements, and methods for claiming social justice.

In this thesis, I have focused my research on a single social media platform, drawing on empirical work as well as the published literature into SMNs and social movements. This focus was refined through my own research interests and background, and by the data that was available to me from Twitter. More importantly, Twitter data is more refined in my research: for the most part of the thesis I focus only on the originally posted tweets (OP) and only explore retweets and tweets that include links, photos, and videos, in Chapter 7. The implausibility of analysing all that data, the tightness of the available time, and the story-focus are partly responsible here. As Jordan (2015:57) argues: 'as we manage information in new ways, information itself mutates into new forms that often require new types of management'. In order to manage the information, I developed an innovative method for analysing Twitter content, which was vital to this social media research, and to frameworks such as NTA, which mix quantitative and qualitative analyses. Indeed, I assert that this approach will continue to be essential with new platforms, practices, and ethical boundaries.

Moreover, it is important to recognise the biases and limitations of my research, including the tools and methods used as well as Twitter's limitations and biases. The data I analysed here through narrative analysis represented the visible social media activity under one hashtag (#OWS). However, the active users on Twitter are not representative of the USA population, or even the New York population. Indeed, there are broad

differences between people who use social media and those who do not, further complicated by underlying global and local practices of social media use and the influence of the digital divide. Additionally, other stories can be found under other hashtags. I have not claimed to offer a complete overview of everything that OWS communicated on Twitter. Furthermore, I have not traced all its narratives on Twitter. Instead, this thesis has underlined a number of dominant narratives, practices, and processes that occurred and recurred on Twitter during the last forty days of the movement's on-the-ground action.

A recurring contradiction concerning Twitter and OWS has featured in this thesis. The benefits of Twitter–its accessibility, instantaneity, the challenging of hierarchical norms and mainstream media narratives—can also have disadvantages. First, the ephemerality governing the content shared on Twitter both creates momentum for movements, but also creates an environment in which the moment is quickly replaced by the next important event. This causes a quick turnaround of reactions and responses, which often do not allow space for reflection and on-the-ground action. Second, the openness of the platform, and the ability to add to the conversation through common hashtags means that other users can mobilise these features for abusive purposes. Just as Twitter was used as a tool for social justice and advancing the movement's messages, it was also used by aggressors who did not share the same views. The social movement narratives I have discussed here are deployed for a number of seemingly contradictory purposes. I do not maintain that Twitter's use for social movements is positive or can only benefit the movement and its politics, because it is not the case. Of course, Twitter *could be* a platform for social movement communication, but we cannot disregard the fact that communities that challenge social, cultural, and political norms through SMNs are subjected to unsolicited aggression, threats, and abuse from users that use the same platforms.

Although these social media narratives act as a *mirror* that shows OWS' characteristics, they can also be a *lamp* that may guide future movements into more productive and resourceful uses of these platforms. Through the analysis of narratives that constructed OWS on Twitter, activists can look into the elements that *worked* and into those elements that *did not work*, to make use of the benefits of such platforms, but also to gain awareness of their disadvantages. Along these lines, more research is necessary to explore whether telling social movement stories on Twitter is productive to the movements themselves. Literature related to the collective memory of past movements shows that there have been instrumental efforts to adapt revolutionary pasts to current movements, and points to the limits of these struggles (Polletta, 1998). However, one can imagine a number of reasons people may not consider social media as the space in which movements can blossom. Insofar as social media platforms are controlled by corporate concerns based on profit margins, or by governments' that strive for surveillance, social media use by social movements may contradict what is expected of social movements that demand social change.

Further research should also evaluate social media narratives' role in the dynamics of self-representation rather than the representation of a social movement *per se*. Why do people tell social media stories? Most of them likely do so to feel part of a group and strengthen or sustain the community they feel part of. Looking into the motivations, reasons, and catalysts that make people add their social media stories to social movement narratives on Twitter may unfold practices that are not obvious through discourse or narrative analysis. In my view, movements in which the aim is self-transformation as much as political transformation may see social media storytelling *as* activism.

Finally, the stories in this thesis were told about a movement that already belongs to the *past*. The narratives spelled out here can form a way to trace the movement's longer-term cultural impact and influences on movements

that came after it, like Occupy London, Occupy Amsterdam, Nuit Debut in France, and the Black Lives Matter movement in the USA and the UK. Changes in the social, cultural, and political understanding of such movements are more difficult to trace than legislative changes brought up by such movements. I have already pointed out, in Chapter 2, the relevance of OWS to Occupy. Future research, however, can draw lines between the Occupy movements and reveal their intertwined narratives.

This research filled four empirical gaps. First, it showed how much the mainstream media representation influenced discussions around OWS. I have argued that the media ecology of the movement had to be entirely dependent on social media, and specifically Twitter, because mainstream media narratives had at times misrepresented OWS and even fabricated stories that may have led to the unfair delegitimisation of the movement. Second, I have examined the degree to which narratives of violence on Twitter influenced the story of the movement and may have alienated supporters or potential supporters. Violence against social movements does not exist purely and solely on-the-ground, but it is also present in online spaces. Even though a number of academics (e.g. Juris, 2012) have considered social media as a new public egalitarian sphere, this thesis has shown that this is not the case. There is no reason to consider the so-called 'offline' to be more real than what is known as the 'online'. Third, I have demonstrated that the ephemeral nature of Twitter can also benefit social movement narratives. Twitter makes possible instantaneous and powerful expressions of support and solidarity when something unfair, like the eviction of the movement, takes place forcefully. And finally, I suggest that we should regard OWS' identity as a multifaceted identity, one that is structured through both personal and collective narratives, and which is governed by processes that are in a constant flux.

Ultimately, this thesis suggests that, although there are a number of ways to look into the dynamics of social movements on social media. Narrative

analysis makes a compelling contribution to acknowledging OWS' Twitter story as a set of dominant narratives. OWS' supporters and activists did more than tell stories on Twitter. They occupied Zuccotti Park, negotiated with the police, planned marches, and tried to stand their ground when NYPD began the eviction process on the 15th of November. In the same way, movements consist of discourses other than social media narratives, including embodied, expressive, and persuasive forms. Here the task was to show not only why and when some social media narratives become forms of a social movement's representation on Twitter, but to also show what kinds of stories characterised OWS' dynamics, directions, and identities.

Storytelling on Twitter is important because it reflects the tensions generated when people create a movement together, and at times does more than just show those complex processes: it finds a way to simplify them. Tracing OWS' narratives on Twitter offers one way to approach and potentially unpack the conflicts and compromises that characterise contemporary social movements. It is a way of tracking the storyline of this movement. Indeed, a story, if told well, may be able to create the right context and resilient environment for a future social movement to live, prosper, and impact our politics.

I have argued that social media storytelling as a mode of discourse in OWS' story, unveils the dynamics of the movement. Social media narratives' ability to give coherence to events, guidance, and affective resonance offers not only an interpretation of the events structuring the movement, but also a rationale for the OWS' importance as a contemporary movement.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Information Sheet, Interview Schedule & Consent Form

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

REP-H/12/13-27

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET

Social Media Storytelling: The Occupy movement and the narratives constructing it

We would like to invite you to participate in this original postgraduate research project. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Thank you for reading this.

- This study focuses on a number of interviewees that participated, in any way, in the Occupy movement. It will aim to understand the mechanisms between online and on-the-ground action, by investigating the use of the social media platforms of Twitter and Facebook as storytelling devices of the movement's development. This approach will also form a strong tool for realising the attitudes, meanings and understandings of the Occupy movement as seen through the eyes of people who were involved in its practices.

- This project is being partly funded by the graduate school of King's College London.

- You are being invited to take part in this study since people who have participated in the Occupy movement are in a good position to offer insight into this topic, express views on the movement's past, development and future while commenting on their experiences.

- The interview can be carried in any public or semi-public environment; whichever would be more convenient for you. It will be based around a semi structured interview pattern and will take approximately 30-40 minutes.

- This is an opportunity for you to express your views on the Occupy movement, the movement's strengths, benefits and drawbacks, and the role of social media to the movement.

- The interview will be audio recorded through a digital recorder, and later transcribed into text form. Audio recordings of interviews will be deleted upon transcription.

- As part of the presentation of results, your own words may be used in text form. All names and information will be anonymised and data will be confidential throughout the project.

- It will not be possible to identify you as a participant in this study through any published material, in order to ensure compliance with the UK Data Protection Act 1998. However, if you would like to be identified, we are happy to name you in the credits of the project and in any reports. This will only be done if you explicitly request us to do so; our default assumption is that you would like us to keep your information anonymous.

- All of the data (your name and interview details) will be stored as hard copy at Kings College London for four years; accessed will only be allowed to *Photini Vrikki*.

Please note that you can decide to stop the interview at any point and you do not need to answer any questions that you do not wish to.

It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw during the interview or any time up until 7th October 2014 and without giving a reason. If you withdraw from the study all data will be withdrawn and destroyed.

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact the researcher using the following contact details:

Contact for further information
Photini Vrikki
Email: photini.vrikki@kcl.ac.uk
Phone: +44 (0) 7925591687

If this study has harmed you in any way you can contact King's College London using the details below for further advice and information:

Dr Tim Jordan,
Creative Arts Administrative Centre,
Room 5D, D Floor,
Chesham Building,
King's College London,
Strand,
London WC2R 2LS, England
Email: timothy.jordan@kcl.ac.uk
Phone: +44 (0) 20 78481100

Thank you
Interview Cover Sheet

Storytelling in social media: The occupy movement and the narratives constructing it

Interview	
Date	
Place (e.g. coffee shop)	
Length (in minutes)	
Respondent characteristics	
Profession	
Age	
Is this the first movement he has ever taken part?	
Time spent with the Occupy	
What is the respondent's role in the movement?	
Additional circumstantial information	

Country/City_____

Interview Schedule

Part 1: The respondent's protest history

- How did you get involved in protests and Occupy specifically?
  - Why do you think you were interested in this movement?
  - What was the main reason you got involved?
  - How many of your friends were also involved?
  - With which of the Occupy's ideas do you think you most identify with?
  - What do you think was the impact of the Occupy on your life?

- Was your involvement a 'full time' or a 'part time' affair?
  - What was the balance between your everyday routine and Occupy?
  - Did you consider alternative ways to get involved with Occupy instead of going at the occupied/protest sites? If yes, what were they?

- In what ways do you think protests have changed since you first got involved with protests/Occupy?

Part 2: The respondent's views on social media activist practices

1. How do you think people succeeded in getting together and create these protests?
2. How do you communicate with other Occupy members?
3. How do you get informed about Occupy?
4. Do you have any social media accounts? If yes, how do you use them? (e.g. Twitter or Facebook)
5. Have you ever used social media to communicate with other Occupy members or get informed about the Occupy movement?
6. Have you ever visited any websites of the Occupy movements? Why?
7. In your personal opinion to what extend are social media helping the development and organisation of the Occupy movement?

8. In your opinion, is it important for protesters to use social media as a communication tool?
9. In your experience, how important is it to have a Facebook or a Twitter account in order to get involved with the Occupy?
10. In your experience, how important is the role of social media in the Occupy movement?
11. In your experience, how important is it to communicate with other Occupy movements for having a successful protest?
12. Do you think it is important for a protest to have international supporters?

Part 3: An evaluation of the Occupy movement and the respondent's involvement

- Is it possible to identify crucial factors that differentiate the Occupy movement from any other past or present movement? If so, what are these factors?
- Do you think that it has created a community with common goals?

- What do you like about the Occupy movement?

  - What are the best aspects of taking part in its protests?
  - What are the 'worst' aspects of it?
  - Would you change something concerning its character if it was possible?

- Do you thing that the Occupy movement has a fruitful future?

  - Is there anything else you would like to share with me about what we have discussed today?

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH STUDIES

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Title of Study: *Social Media Storytelling: The Occupy movement and the narratives constructing it*

King's College Research Ethics Committee Ref: _____

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. The person organising the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

- I understand that if I decide at any time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and withdraw from it immediately without giving any reason. Furthermore, I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up to the point of publication (deadline for withdrawal: 07/10/2014).

- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be handled in accordance with the terms of the UK Data Protection Act 1998.

- I wish for my contribution to be treated as partially anonymous. I wish to be mentioned in any future publications.

…BUT I do not wish any quotations to be directly attributed to me

- I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me in any publications.

- I consent to my interview being video and audio recorded.

Participant's Statement:
I -
_____
_____

agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

Signed Date

Investigator's Statement:
I _____
Confirm that I have carefully explained the nature, demands and any foreseeable risks (where applicable) of the proposed research to the participant.

Appendix 2: Excluded hashtags

Tweets with the following hashtags have been deleted, in order to clean the dataset and focus on the case of Occupy Wall Street on the #ows hashtag:

1. #occupyla
2. #OccupyAuckland
3. #OccupyBerlin
4. #occupyphoenix
5. #ccupyseattle
6. #occupylondon
7. #OccupyDublin
8. #occupysydney
9. #occupytoronto
10. #occupystpetersburg
11. #occupySF
12. #occupyperth
13. #occupyGeneva
14. #occupyswiss
15. #OccupyCanada
16. #occupyphoenix
17. #occupywashingtonsquare
18. #occupyDC
19. #occupyasia
20. #occupyafrica
21. #occupyseattle
22. #occupywashingtonsquare
23. #occupymelbourne
24. #occupywashsq
25. #OccupyRome
26. #occupylsx
27. #OccupyParis
28. #occupymadrid
29. #occupyBerlin
30. #occupysd
31. #occupydenver
32. #OccupyMELBOURNE
33. #occupyminnesota

34. #occupyportland
35. #occupyLA
36. #occupydetroit
37. #occupyphx
38. #Detroit
39. #occupyhouston
40. #occupyedinburgh
41. #occupymelb
42. #occupyaustralia
43. #occupyaustin
44. #occupypittsburgh
45. #occupyiowa
46. #occupydenver
47. #occupysj
48. #occupyphiladelphia
49. #occupyAmsterdam
50. #OccupySacto
51. #OccupyPlattsburgh
52. #occupycleveland
53. #occupyBrooklyn
54. #occupytheBronx
55. #occupyIndy
56. #occupysacramento
57. #occupysandiego
58. #occupyoakland
59. #occupylasvegas
60. #occupysac
61. #occupyYEG
62. #occupyCapeTown
63. #occupySanDiego
64. #occupyMN
65. #occupyChi
66. #occupyyoucouch
67. #occupyTulsa
68. #occupyLennox
69. #occupydenhaag
70. #occupymn
71. #occupyparis
72. #occupydenhaag
73. #occupykc

74. #occupyns
75. #occupydx
76. #occupybuffalo
77. #occupyvienna
78. #occupyEaston

Appendix 3: Trial & Error methods

Trying AntConc as an analytical tool: two-words clusters

Two-words phrase	Times it occurs in the dataset
of the	4367
in the	2821
for the	2054
to the	2027
to be	2016
is a	1783
on the	1718
Wall Street	1447
is the	1361
I am	1091
going to	1091
want to	1078
will be	991
If you	969
out of	966
is not	959
are the	950
We are	940
I think	878
have a	870
at the	869
to get	839
and the	838
need to	837
trying to	829
Occupy Wall	824
with the	803
they are	794
the 99%	791
all the	779
for a	779
This is	778
in a	775
from the	764
I don't	762
by the	705
that the	679
have to	676
to see	669
you are	667
the people	647
I have	630
if you	628
should be	619
about the	615
part of	613
we are	604
be a	589
the same	587

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