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**Citation:** Mercea, D., Nixon, P. & Funk, A. (2013). Unaffiliated Socialization and Social Media Recruitment: Reflections from Occupy the Netherlands. In: Nixon, P., Rawal, R. & Mercea, D. (Eds.), *Politics and the Internet in Comparative Context: Views from the Cloud*. (pp. 232-247). London, UK: Routledge. ISBN 9780415638678

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## **Unaffiliated Socialization and Social Media Recruitment: Reflections from Occupy the Netherlands**

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**This paper has been accepted for publication in the edited volume by Paul Nixon, Rajash Rawal and Dan Mercea (eds.) (July 2013) *Views from the Cloud: Politics, Citizens and the Internet in Comparative Perspective*, London: Routledge. The final (edited, revised and typeset) version of this paper will be published by Taylor and Francis Ltd, All rights reserved. © Taylor and Francis, 2013.**

It is a topic of lasting interest for social movement scholars and political scientists alike whether the ubiquitous media environment in which citizens now operate has an imprint on the scope and quality of their appetite for civic engagement (Bimber, 2003; Jenkins, 2006; Coleman & Blumler, 2009). In particular, there has been continued querying of social media usage as an avenue for renewed political socialization. A 'mobilisation effect' leading to a swell in the number of participants in activism and specifically in physical instances of participation such as demonstrations continues to be disputed (Fisher & Boekkooi, 2010; van Laer, 2010). Moreover, much skepticism has been voiced about the enabling role social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, have had in the not so distant popular uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East (see Morozov, 2011). Fresh ethnographic evidence suggests that in a highly censored media environment, those platforms served a key twofold initial purpose: to distribute viral appeals to participation as well as to provide participants with an effective coordination tool, i.e. Twitter (Gerbaudo, forthcoming).

With the present paper, we seek to contribute recently collected evidence from a specific case study to this on-going discussion. In particular, we aim to shed new light onto the question of a hybridity in social movement mobilisation in the digital age. For that purpose, we build upon emerging evidence that social media can contribute to protest participation (Tufekci, Wilson, 2012; Margetts, 2012). In what follows, we discuss this notion in relation to the mobilisation of unaffiliates into the Dutch Occupy Movement.

Unaffiliates are people not involved in activist organizations, whose lack of social embeddedness in such organizations makes them less susceptible to mobilisation than those already affiliated (McAdam, 1986; McAdam & Paulsen, 1993; Verhulst and Walgrave, 2009; Somma, 2010).

We consider unaffiliate mobilisation in the context of the wave of Occupy Protests that swept the world in the autumn of 2012, whilst focusing on the issue of the sustainment of protest over time (Saunders et al., 2012). It has been pointed out that the Occupy protests have had to face the problem of participant attrition in their ranks due to the multiple pressures -in terms of weather conditions, personal security, employment- to which the occupations were subjected (Juris, 2012:269). In that context, the mobilisation of new recruits to compensate for participant attrition can be central to direct action protests (c.f. Doherty et al., 2007) such as the encampments erected by the Occupy movement.

We deploy the notion of hybridity in the same vein as Chadwick (2007) who signalled an amalgamation of deep-seated and emergent practices driving political mobilisation as well as the organization of both entrenched and amorphous actors; all ostensibly powered by their heightened application of social media platforms in order to facilitate participation. Social media have made a substantial contribution to the appropriation of social movement strategies for mobilisation and the articulation of organizational infrastructures (Chadwick, 2007). Specifically, Chadwick points to a devolution of capacities to organize and mobilize political support outside the established framework of party-run political campaigns (2007: 288). Established political actors seem able to expand their support bandwidth once they plug their hierarchical organizations into the loose network of sympathetic groups and individuals that gravitate online and outside their normative organizational confines (see also Flanagin et al., 2006). By so doing, they are expanding the potential for inclusion and participation due to the viral nature of social network communication (Castells, 2007).

Chadwick (2007) suggests that whilst this process has been coming into full swing in mainstream politics, it has characterized for longer the organizational as well as

mobilisation strategies of disparate yet interconnected social movement organizations. In what follows, we seek to probe new empirical evidence gathered at the site of the Occupy protests in the Netherlands for the purpose of offering new comments on the question of the degree to which loosely connected forms of organization and mobilisation underpinned by social media are taking root principally in reference to the recruitment of unaffiliates.

Two key features may render social media amenable to civic and political participation that obviate its underlying commercial logic (Fenton and Barassi, 2011). The first derives from their bandwidth for what Castells (2007) termed 'mass self-communication'. Mass self-communication is the capacity of individuals to virally reach mass audiences with their messages, an attribute of networked communication amplified by social media. Although there are divergent accounts on the questions of the accessibility, usability and reliability of the information circulated through such platforms as Twitter (Morozov, 2009; Segerberg & Bennett, 2011), it seems that accounting for variability in socio-political context, social media are not solely a conduit for information but also a 'networking agent' for activist causes (2011:200). In the latter guise, informed by an actor-network conception of the relation between human and machine (Latour, 2005), social media are active contributors to the diffusion of social relations, their upkeep and the maintenance of the activist communicative ecology they engender.

Although we acknowledge that such a concept does verge on the edge of reifying social networks, we deem it to be of value in conceptualising our understanding of our case study protests and the part played by unaffiliates in their activities. We envisage the role of social media viewed as 'networking agents' to be to facilitate a ratcheting up of interest and involvement in collective action. Those, as yet unaffiliated may, as a result of exposure to a variety of messages on social media platforms, from their friends and the wider networks of those friends, decide to embrace hybridity and add physical participation in the cause to empathetic social media attunement to protests. This expectation is rooted in evidence that unaffiliates may be successfully mobilised indirectly through the mass media, in times of high public emotion (Jasper and Poulsen, 1995).

The second enabling feature of social media may thus lie in the scope it affords to the mitigation of structural constraints to civic participation. That potential might be realized in as far as social exchanges (e.g. Facebook wall posts, 'shares' and 'likes', (re)tweets, shared Youtube clips) galvanize the participation of unaffiliates in protest. There are consistent indications that individuals involved in an activist organization are most likely to partake in activism (McAdam & Paulsen, 1993; Verhulst and Walgrave, 2009; Somma, 2010). Those not involved in an activist organization may come to participate in activism if they are recruited into it by an affiliated friend (Snow et al., 1980). If in the latter case, personal loyalties to friends may act as a catalyst to participation in a social movement action (1980:792), in the former it is an organizational context in which personal ties are lodged that is key to mobilisation (1993:663). In both instances, however, both the mindset and the motivation to participate are fostered by people's prior socialization.

More specifically, by socialization we refer particularly to the initial stages of the interactive process in the course of which new recruits to a group are introduced to its cognitive, affective and behavioural norms (see Levine et al., 2001). The social circulation of information (Margetts et al., 2012) on social media platforms may illustrate how socialization germane to protest participation unfolds. Through social circulation, information rich in descriptive meta-data can spread the reach beyond existing participants, with insights into participant numbers acting as a tipping point for involvement in collective action (2012:19).

We might expect to see social media utilized as an arena for the transfer of ideas leading unaffiliates to participate in protest on the basis of communication with their social media 'friends'. Unaffiliate mobilisation through social media may be a remedy to participant attrition that characterizes direct action groups. Such groups often have to confine participant recruitment to a tight circle of friends, to safeguard the integrity of their action plans. Thus, the renewal of the activist contingent can be a concern in direct action groups who may come to see social media as key to outreach work beyond activist circles (Mercea, 2012). With social media, activists can circulate non-sensitive information pertinent to protest participation to 'non-activist' friends who could not previously be

targeted with other activist media (e.g. because they were not signed up to a relevant activist listserv or had not physically attended activist recruitment events; Mercea, 2010).

Social media have been viewed as a stepping stone for offline participation because they contribute to raising the profile of offline activism (Harlow & Harp, 2012:206). Yet, activism on these platforms does not seem to automatically translate into offline activism (2012:206; see also Christensen, 2011). Notably, Harlow and Harp (2012) drew on a sample of activists who may be classed as a group much like the affiliates in this study, i.e. individuals with an accumulated experience of activist socialization. Nonetheless, the notion that exposure to mobilizing online content may perform a similar role to that of face-to-face communication has been recently upheld, i.e. that such content is conducive to alterations in the knowledge, disposition and behaviour pertinent to involvement in an activist cause (Hooghe et al., 2010:422).

Concurrently, whilst deliberation over the significance of social media for civic activism rages on (Gladwell, 2010; El Hamamsy, 2011; Morozov, 2011; Harlow & Harp, 2012), evidence points to both similarities and distinctions between the use of the key two platforms, Facebook and Twitter. First, both Twitter and Facebook appear to function as a 'buzz-tool', a broadcasting medium for the timely viral circulation of activist content (Jensen et al., 2009; El Hamamsy, 2011; Small, 2011). Secondly, Facebook and particularly Twitter seem to provide latitude for the crystallization of personal connections between people that do not share any pre-existing and direct social bonds (Ellison et al., 2007:1163; Java et al., 2007). Thus, they may offer extensive scope for the creation of bridging social capital, i.e. social connections which nourish information sharing without providing the emotional sustenance that is characteristic of the bonding capital found in closely-knit family or friendship relations. On the other hand, Facebook has been described as a tool for building bonding capital through continued socialization primarily between individuals that share both an online and an offline social connection, regardless of its intensity (Ellison et al., 2007:1153).

By facilitating the circulation of bridging capital, both social media platforms may contribute to the rapid expansion of activist content beyond the confines of closely-knit

activist circles, reaching out to outlying individuals. Moreover, Facebook seems to be concomitantly tailored for the consolidation of bonding capital so that it “may help individuals to maintain pre-existing close relationships” (2007:1163). Below, we consider the question of which of the two may be a more salient contributor to the mobilisation of unaffiliates. We hypothesize that as a medium with a capacity for both bridging and bonding capital, Facebook was more likely than Twitter to contribute to the mobilization of unaffiliated individuals into the Occupy protests. That contribution would be the result of the activist socialization it facilitates amongst friends, key recruitment agents for unaffiliates. We set out to substantiate this hypothesis by examining primary empirical data collected at 4 occupy protest camps in the Netherlands.

### **The Occupy movement: case and sample**

The Occupy movement may be viewed as the most recent embodiment of a transnational protest network that harks back more than a decade to the 1999 protests against the World Trade Organization and the anti-capitalist movement that formed in their wake (della Porta et al., 2006). The spark for the Occupy movement was set in New York on 17 September 2011 at a demonstration in protest against the financial arrangements that led to the 2008 global banking crisis and the attendant economic recession. Prior to that moment, ‘Adbusters’, an organization which has long been a critic of corporate capitalism, created the website [occupywallst.org](http://occupywallst.org) and issued a call for a mass demonstration planned to evolve into a permanent occupation of Wall Street, the preeminent hub of the US financial sector. From that onset onwards, and not unlike previous protest camps (Saunders, 2009), Occupy Wall Street grew as a loose, informal and horizontal network of ‘working groups’ tasked with running the multiplicity of organizational aspects intrinsic to a contentious occupation of a public location -e.g. recruitment, media outreach, police liaison, logistics.

Protest camps have been designed as autonomous physical spaces freed from the authority of the state and the control of the police. They have been described as a milieu where sustainable lifestyles are practiced and direct action protests are planned and



enacted (Jowers, Dürrschmidt, O'Docherty & Purdue, 1999). Occupy Wall Street followed in that spirit whilst making it a fundamental priority to spawn a vast network of discontents around the globe powered by social media. A further element of distinction for the movement was its development as a movement of individuals, first and foremost, not predicated upon existing organizational structures (Tharoor, 2011). Early assessments of the movement (Gandel, 2011:463) noted that 'the Occupiers, mostly in their 20s, have been heavy users of social media to get their message to friends and the rest of the world'.

The protest shockwave generated by Occupy Wall Street was soon propagated around the world, reaching the Netherlands in October 2011. There were 13 Occupy camps established in the Netherlands as focal points for concerted actions to challenge the authorities and project an anti-capitalist message on topics which were both locally focused and/or transcending traditional national boundaries. The most prominent camps were established in Amsterdam and Den Haag (The Hague) on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2011 following demonstrations in support of the Occupy Wall Street movement. Some of the camps have been closed down, e.g. Haarlem and others such as Den Haag and Ede have found themselves having to switch location in order to appease the authorities. Their online presence, in terms of websites, has been via the occupy portal [www.occupythenetherlands.nl](http://www.occupythenetherlands.nl) which gives overarching information relating to the movement and also acts as a gateway to local sites, though not all of the locations have an operative page (as of 5/3/12)<sup>1</sup>. The first posting on the site dates back to 28/10/2011 although postings predate this on some of the local sites. The site also brings together Twitter feeds and Facebook comments on its home page allowing for a wider level of participation.

Of the 13 camps, 4 were surveyed in the present study: Occupy Amsterdam, Occupy Den Haag, Occupy Haarlem and Occupy Utrecht. These four locations were chosen on an exploratory basis with the aim to probe the social media usage at Occupy Camps following a close scrutiny of their presence online. Moreover, Occupy Amsterdam, Occupy Den Haag and Occupy Utrecht attracted close to 2,000 participants between them in the initial demonstrations on 15 October (El Pais, 2011). One month on,

participant numbers had dropped to a few tens of people at all the visited encampments. All the four camps had one or more Facebook outlets, i.e. a page, a group or both. Similarly, all had Twitter accounts and all had been covered in video footage on Youtube. Moreover, all were still running offline and were active online at the start of the fieldwork, roughly one month after the first Occupy protests in the Netherlands. The current study provides an emergent perspective on social media usage at these Camps. The article is not designed to put forward overarching generalizations but rather to find some much needed empirical roots for the analysis of social media in and for protest (see Harlow & Harp, 2012).

Relying on a mixed-methods approach, the field study was aimed at mapping out the deployment and usage of social media. For the purpose of gathering quantitative data, we drew on the protest survey methodology as outlined by Walgrave and Verhulst (2009). Protest surveys provide a bridge between the broader context of a protest, which has traditionally been probed with general population surveys, and the intricate process of mobilization at the level of individuals or sub-groups from the general population. Drawing on a purposive sample of 45 surveys from the participants (79% response rate<sup>ii</sup>), the quantitative data captures a cohort that was physically present at protest sites.

The surveys were conducted at peak activity times in the Camps' daily cycles, during their general assemblies. General assemblies were run in the early evenings and brought together all those that took a direct interest in the workings and the actions of the Camps. All participants at the general assemblies were asked to fill out a questionnaire. Although the final number of surveys was not large, in absolute terms, we would argue the figure reflects the state of the Dutch Occupy protests after the global Occupy movement had peaked<sup>iii</sup>.

Participant observation, unstructured and semi-structured interview were run with the aim to further embed the quantitative analysis (Bryman, 2001) into the particularities of the visited Occupy Camps. A team of researchers both distributed survey questionnaires at the four Camps and interviewed participants about their involvement in the protest movement. The resulting ethnographic data was recorded in an audio diary. As well as

providing an opportunity for reflections on the specificities of the Occupy Camps in the Netherlands, interview data is reported in the analysis with the aim to hone the key concepts developed in this paper (see Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

## **Analysis**

At all the visited camps, participant attrition was a subject of concern. That was chiefly because the daily business of running the encampments required a significant resource commitment. This fuelled a sense of frustration with camp logistics whilst concurrently making some participants believe that the protest was increasingly losing its appeal to the outside world. In the second half of November 2011, participant numbers were either stagnant or dwindling at all the visited Camps. Added to this reductive internal dynamic, pressure from local authorities to either downsize or altogether dismantle the encampments resulted in the Dutch movement increasingly migrating online as it passed the one month mark of its existence. The process climaxed with the effective closure of the Amsterdam encampment in December 2011, in the run up to Christmas. In the words of one of the Camp activists, “[mostly] the people that are...off site are trying to connect with people. The camp itself has really...mostly to do with their (sic) own small problems and are actually cut off from the rest of the world” (Joost, 2012).

In a semi-structured interview with one of the media coordinators of the Occupy Amsterdam Camp, Daphne (21 November 2011), a picture emerged of how Facebook had catalysed her participation and her subsequent efforts to raise the visibility of the Camp. A freelancing artist and a person without prior affiliation or previous involvement in protest, Daphne learnt about Occupy Wall Street online. Observing the growth of the Occupy movement, she decided to set up an Occupy Amsterdam Facebook page and in that manner kindle mobilization into a subsequent physical occupation.

Six weeks into the protest, a walk through the Occupy Amsterdam would present a quasi-deserted Camp to the casual observer. Indeed, there seemed to be more tourists about,

photographing themselves among the tents in Beursplein, than activists engaged in any variety of protest activity. Yet, Daphne was quick to point out that Occupy Amsterdam existed around a nexus of networked individuals, loosely connected through their digital communication. She thus provided a confirmation to the view that the essential character of this social movement was 'hybrid' in its nature, in the communicational sense described above.

A horizontal, heterarchical organization, Occupy Amsterdam represented an aggregation of individual efforts to sustain a global, leaderless movement that, it was envisioned, broke away from the organizational templates of earlier political mobilizations. Individual drives led to the creation of the Amsterdam Camp's website, its Facebook account and to the accumulation of resources required to set up the occupation. Individual protesters came and went, becoming variably involved in the workings of the Camp, turning up at peak moments such as rallies and demonstrations. The physical accessibility of the Amsterdam and the other visited Occupy Camps, all located in city centres, seemed to augment the perception of an open and scalable movement tailored particularly to individual participation. Such perception appeared to motivate Joost to walk into the Camp in Den Haag.

A student, Joost had no previous involvement with political activism in either mainstream or alternative politics. As a telling example of hybridity, he initially directed himself to a Dutch Occupy website and got in touch with the people running it. He subsequently conversed with them in a private IRC chat-room before making his way to the then rising Occupy Den Haag. As he recounted, he was inspired by what he found in the Camp "because I could never adjust myself to one group. And maybe because this [Camp] didn't already have...specific goals, it was easy for me to go there" (Joost, 9 December 2011). Based on that initial assessment, Joost surmised that he would become involved in the Den Haag Occupation and start on a path of self-learning that would allow him to raise the profile of their cause:

"When I was there, I saw that they needed help, you know, because I saw a lot of people that wanted to do a lot. And I felt for those people because they really wanted

to [amplify their protest] but, you know, they had [much like] me no experience or zero ideas for how to connect people and how to get people [in]to the movement” (9 December 2011).

Consequently, Joost became the Den Haag’s media and outreach coordinator and took up the task of expanding mobilization by means already familiar to him, which in his eyes were then underused at Camp level. He resorted chiefly to social media platforms that had enabled him to keep abreast with the Occupy Movement as well as to publicize the Camp in Den Haag. He particularly viewed social media as an effective channel for individual and personal mobilization whilst concurrently regarding it as a threat to the same process for two key reasons. On the one hand, he bemoaned the discrepancy in numbers between the support the Den Haag Occupation had on Facebook, 1,400 followers, and on the ground, i.e. less than thirty people. On the other, he was apprehensive of efforts to stay active on Facebook, as a Camp, lest that would create an information overload putting a strain on people’s capacity to follow its actions.

“I think we’ve got 1400 fans on *Facebook* and I think 900 people are just there to show off. Okay, we are occupying, you know- but it doesn’t involve [us] in any [other] way. But that’s fine, you know, as long as they spread the word everybody is welcomed, from my part. And, uhm, you are also occupying when you only speak about it, you know”(9 December 2011).

As transpires from the above quote, Joost was not encouraging of what others have disparagingly termed *clicktivism* or *slacktivism* (Morozov, 2011). Yet, he highlighted a key feature of the Occupy movement, its accommodating hybridity. He advised that one need not draw a distinction between the online movement and the offline camp. Together, the two created an ‘Occupy’ ethos which he believed augmented the movement through social referrals, increased its visibility and propagated its worldview. Ultimately, in his assessment, Facebook was the best medium for mobilization through personal appeals. Nonetheless, he was aware that concerted efforts at recruitment might be overbearing, leading to a state not dissimilar to compassion fatigue associated with charity appeals (Moeller, 1999). Joost further poignantly remarked:

“I also think *Facebook* could be a weakness. *Facebook* could, uhm if you do it personal way...could really get people involved. But you can also get people sick and tired of your movement... [once] everybody [spams] your page. It can be very effective but only if you use it well” (9 December 2011).

A clear distinction was drawn by Joost between Facebook and Twitter in terms of their utilization in the Camp’s communication. Twitter he viewed as a *reactive* medium suited for generating waves of instant posts and commentary on a story. Twitter, he believed, could be used for rolling coverage of protest actions functioning as a syndication tool for story feeds. Yet, in his eyes, the very quality which made it fitting for dissemination provided, unlike Facebook, too narrow a bandwidth for more personal engagement.

“...I found *Twitter* very handy, I don’t know, not for involve[ment]. But when we are busy with a live-show, I can *Twitter* things and you can get a lot [of] people in your live-stream at the moment, you know. It’s very reactive, *Twitter*. And *Facebook* is less reactive, but that’s better for the personal contact” (9 December 2011).

To further explore the above notion of hybridity, we turned our attention to the quantitative data. First, we noted there were only two respondents (7%) who said they did not use the internet. That result seemed to be closely in line with Eurostat statistics indicating that 94% of Dutch households had an internet connection in 2011. Slightly more than one third of the respondents had no prior affiliation to an activist organisation or a political party (36%, n=16) whilst two thirds did (63%, n=29). Thus, unaffiliates were not as large a cohort as one may have inferred from the in-depth interviews. Nonetheless, they still represented more than a third of all participants. The figure suggested that the camps had been, to some extent, successful in extending mobilisation beyond organisational confines.

Nearly three quarters of the participants were male (73%; n=33). More than two thirds had secondary vocational or higher education degrees (67%, n=30). In terms of age distribution, they covered the spectrum between 16 and over 55 years of age with the

best represented age group being that of the 25 to 34 year olds (35%, n=15) followed by the 16 to 24 years old (26%, n=11) and the 35 to 44 (21%, n=9) years old. Such skewness in the distribution towards younger and more educated male participants suggested some correspondence with previous assessments of the predominant demographic among the key Occupy Wall Street constituency of the cross-national movement. Likewise, Wall Street occupiers were described as young and well-educated with two thirds of them being male (Cordero-Guzman, 2011:2-3).

Similarities between Occupy Wall Street and the researched Occupy protests appeared to extend also to social media usage. Those involved in Occupy Wall Street were particularly heavy users of Youtube (73.9%) and Facebook (66.4%) and to a lesser extent of Twitter (28.9%). On close inspection, there seemed to be more Facebook than Twitter users among the Dutch occupiers. More respondents were generally going on Facebook than on Youtube and Twitter or used email and messenger services (see Table 1). On further scrutiny, the highest proportion of participants were using Facebook together with other platforms, i.e. Youtube ( $X = 13.465$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p < .001$ ), email ( $X = 10.984$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and messenger ( $X = 5.805$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p < .05$ ) but not Twitter. Most participants who were using Facebook were not using Twitter but the result was not significant. Finally, the majority of the respondents (80%, n=35) used principally the internet to learn about the protests with the majority of them choosing Facebook (72%, n=26) for the purpose, followed at a great distance by Youtube (n=3) and electronic newspapers (n=3).

TABLE 1 HERE

When considering the self-reported use of these services for protest activities in the widest sense<sup>iv</sup>, participants again appeared to rely chiefly on Facebook (see Table 1). The largest number of them were using Facebook together with Youtube ( $X = 9.385$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p < .01$ ) but not Twitter, email or messenger services when engaging in protest activities. Attention was subsequently turned to the question of a differentiation in the use of Facebook between the affiliates and the unaffiliates. First, whether the two cohorts used Facebook to stay abreast with the Occupy protests was examined<sup>v</sup>. A cross-tabulation was done for the purpose which suggested that gleaning information about the Occupy

protests through Facebook was negatively associated with affiliation ( $X = 6.724$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In other words, there seemed to be a significant link between unaffiliation and tracking the protests on Facebook. On the other hand, using Facebook to communicate with friends about attending the Occupy protests was negatively associated with affiliation<sup>vi</sup>. By way of another cross-tabulation, we noted that virtually all the unaffiliates had used Facebook to the above end ( $X=5.032$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Put differently, these results pointed to a significant link between unaffiliation and protest communication with friends on Facebook.

For the purpose of extending the comparison to the use of Facebook, a Mann-Whitney test was conducted. The test showed that in terms of their general usage of Facebook and in their use of it for protest activities, the two cohorts were not dissimilar. However, there was a statistically significant difference between affiliates, unaffiliates and their use of Facebook to communicate with friends about attending the Occupy protest ( $Mdn=25.00$ ,  $U=104$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $r = -.40$ ) as well as for keeping abreast with the Occupy protests ( $Mdn=25.00$ ,  $U=117$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $r = .35$ ). It thus appeared that unaffiliation was associated with statistically significant higher levels of Occupy-related communication and information collection than affiliation. Running the same tests on Twitter usage, specifically to get or post information about the Occupy protests produced no statistically significant results. Moreover, when looking at the application of both Facebook and Twitter to the recruitment of social media contacts or to their deployment to popularize the Occupy Camps, no statistically significant relation with affiliation could be established.

Reflecting on this first set of findings from the perspective of the study's hypothesis, the discrimination between Facebook and Twitter seemed justified. Facebook appeared to be the platform of choice for general usage, in protest activities or when it came to staying informed about the Occupy protests and communicating with friends about them. Yet, participants were not of the view that either Facebook or Twitter enabled them to recruit their friends into the protests. Indeed, the largest number from both categories was not actively recruiting their friends into the Occupy protests on Facebook or via Twitter. We would suggest that Facebook was a means for unaffiliates to share comments on the Occupy protests with friends whilst priming their participation in the protests. For neither



affiliates nor unaffiliates did it appear to be a means to persuade their contacts to attend those protests.

On closer examination, it was clear that affiliates were not utilizing Facebook to broach their participation with friends or to recruit new people into their own Occupy protest ( $X=5.929$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Moreover, affiliates were decidedly not employing Twitter to the above ends ( $X=7.074$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<.05$ ). We interpreted these results to mean that whilst using Facebook was a way of plugging into the protests for unaffiliates, it did not make much difference to recruitment into a later stage of the Occupy protests, with affiliates particularly unlikely to draw on it for the purpose.

In the last instance, Facebook may have contributed to the activist socialization of unaffiliates (see also Mercea, 2012) stemming from their communication about attendance at the Occupy protests. Nonetheless, neither their communication nor that of affiliates could be described as an act of active recruitment of Facebook contacts into those protests. Twitter, on the other hand, was not a platform to which unaffiliated participants seemed to turn to either collect or spread information about the protests to any significant extent.

## **Conclusion**

We would contend that our exploratory piece takes a small but significant step towards a better and more systematic grasp of the contribution social media can make to protest mobilization. We would emphasize that our treatment of unaffiliated participation at the Dutch Occupy Camps rests upon the appreciation that the Occupy movement was first and foremost a movement of individuals absent of pre-existing organizational underpinnings. Equipping oneself with information about the Occupy protests through Facebook may have acted as a galvaniser to the physical participation of unaffiliates in the Camps. That may have been by virtue of the sense such information generated of a popular uprising, inviting all to actively contribute to the Occupy agenda evidenced in the in-depth interviews.

The action repertoires encountered at the Occupy encampments placed Facebook followers at the heart of the dissemination of the Occupy aims and ethos. Nonetheless, as one of our interviewees pointed out, on the downside, Facebook users, including unaffiliates, could be put off from participation if flooded with activist messages. It would seem that whilst Facebook might act as a tipping point to participation, as in Daphne's case, there was also the possibility of scale-tipping away from participation. Perhaps more research is need to try to map out such tipping points and how they differ by activist cause or indeed by individual.

The activist socialization of unaffiliates, we would argue, if not exclusive to their Facebook usage was aided by it. Whilst it should not be over-stated, there is some evidence that Facebook was a medium for information retrieval and discussion among unaffiliated friends around their prospective participation in the Occupy Camps. However, Facebook did not appear to be actively employed for recruitment into the Occupy protests. Moreover, findings seemed to lend support to claims that digital communication plays a secondary role in recruitment carried out by activists (Diani, 2001). Thus, the postulate that Facebook followers act as relays for the protest ethos made by one of our interviewees could be further explored in similar studies in order to generate a closer picture of whom such pro-active followers may be.

To conclude, we would return to the contrast we have pursued between Facebook and Twitter. Our survey data pointed to a substantially lower use of Twitter than Facebook. Twitter was to no significant degree a source of information about the Camps or an avenue for deliberations on participation in them. Nor was it a platform for recruitment among either the unaffiliates or affiliated participants. Furthermore, Twitter did not appear to be the touted 'buzz' tool for viral information dissemination. So it was chiefly Facebook which, by virtue of its latitude for consolidating bonding capital, enabled unaffiliates to crystalize their prospective participation. Most interestingly, results suggested that whilst friends remained key galvanizers of unaffiliated recruitment, the process may start to unfold online in as far as Facebook acted as the principal source of

information about the Occupy protests. What is more, such information seemed to be digested on the same platform among friends.

Unaffiliates' path to participation was a testimony to the hybridity of mobilization with the social circulation of information acting as a key catalyst to involvement in the Dutch Occupy encampments as showed by both our qualitative and quantitative data. Somewhat surprising, results were not suggesting Facebook and Twitter usage were complementary, i.e. that Twitter would help extend unaffiliated participation while Facebook would be instrumental to firming up unaffiliate interest in the Occupy camps. Indeed, neither of the platforms seemed to be actively deployed towards the recruitment of new participants. In other words, the original expectation that social media would be deployed to actively address participant attrition at the Occupy camps had to be invalidated. If particularly unaffiliates initially relied on Facebook to prime their participation, neither they nor affiliated participants were relying on social media to boost participation in the encampments, one month after they were set up. Our ethnographic observations pointed to a phase in the Dutch Occupy protest cycle characterized by a preoccupation of existing participants with keeping the encampments going rather than expanding them.

**Table 1: Usage of Internet Platforms**

Internet service	General Usage (N; %)		Protest Usage (N; %)	
	N	%	N	%
Facebook	37	82	30	65
Youtube	34	76	17	37
Twitter	14	31	11	24
Email	36	78	24	52
Messenger services	23	50	13	28

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<sup>i</sup> The local sites each have different outputs and styling for example see <http://occupydenhaag.org/> or <http://www.occupyede.nl/>.

<sup>ii</sup>This rate was regarded as high for the survey distribution and administration methods employed- face-to-face distribution of paper-based, self-administered questionnaires (Weisberg, Krosnick, Bowen 1996:121).

<sup>iii</sup> Fieldwork started on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2011 in Den Haag, a day after the evacuation of the Camp in Zuccotti Park on Wall Street, a topic widely covered in the international media at that time.

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<sup>iv</sup> Respondents were asked whether they generally used any of the following: Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, email or messenger services for protest and non-activities. Both choices were possible and the variables for analysis were transformed to faithfully reflect the resulting options.

<sup>v</sup> The question was part of a battery which prompted respondents to report on their use of the internet to prepare for their participation in the Occupy protests. Specifically in reference to their Facebook usage they were asked if they had used the internet ‘to follow the Occupy protests on Facebook’.

<sup>vi</sup> The corresponding survey question was: “Have you used the internet to communicate with friends on Facebook about attending this Occupy Camp?”