Documenting Protest and Police: Occupy Wall Street and the (R)evolution of Digital Mobile Video

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ABSTRACT

The importance of mobile phone video technology was highlighted in September 2011, when the Occupy Wall Street movement transformed Zuccotti Park in New York into a public space for protest. For those not present, the occupation was witnessed and interpreted through the reporting of traditional media – local and global news organizations, the Internet, radio and printed media. Yet most vitally, Occupy Wall Street was characterized by a new form of representation captured through the camera phone lenses of localized practitioners experimenting and rapidly realizing, often in real time, the value of mobile phone cameras within the new media ecology of social activism.

Perhaps nowhere are the implications of recent digital video technologies more influential than in the synthesis of activist movements, citizen journalism, documentary practices and emerging forms of new media, such as the live streaming application – Ustream. Analyzing the practices that matured during the Occupy movement through the lens of Manuel DeLanda's interpretation of *assemblage* theory this article offers a critical reflection of the technological, cultural and networked *diagram* that was present at the time, including but not limited to access to available technologies (the proliferation of cameras, web technologies and protocols and other telecommunications standards and the networks they form). I examine the video practice of Tim Pool, a practitioner whose evolution from citizen to citizen journalist to journalist reflects the complexity, spontaneity and often contiguity of *assemblage*. Furthermore, using *assemblage* as a key-mapping device, this article explores the emerging practices and networks birthed, reinforced and reworked during the Occupy Wall Street movement and throughout New York City in the months after the Zuccotti Park encampment dispersed.

Introduction: Local Case Studies from a Global Project

This article reports initial findings from a project investigating the work of digital video practitioners documenting on the edges of global and localized social justice movements, while

utilizing current digital technologies such as smart phones, point and shoot cameras and digital editing software, as well as exploring the ways in which these practitioners integrate their practice within online spaces and disseminate their work to the greater public. A fundamental aspect to this project is a direct engagement in meaningful conversation with these practitioners, exploring how they understand and approach their practice. These emergent practices, recent and often spontaneous, have become an integral part of how we *see and capture* the world through the screens and lenses in our hands and in those of our neighbours.

Although this research examines emerging digital video practices in three global locations – the United States, New Zealand and India – this article focuses on and considers case studies that surfaced in New York City, around the Occupy Wall Street movement of the latter part of 2011. Could the technological infrastructure and tools present have played a role in the formation of these methods of video documentation and the construction of documentary narratives? In what ways might have technology, forms of video recording, shifting politics, online methods of storytelling and other factors assemble, disassemble and reassemble during the months before, during and after the occupation of Zuccotti Park? How do these assemblages help us in understanding these nascent digital video practices? Additionally, this article will explore the momentum of these media practices and discuss the further practices of a few select practitioners and facilitators who emerged from the physical disintegration of the Occupy Wall Street movement.

Assembling and Forming Digital Video Practices

A useful way to begin to think about how technologies and practices merge is through an examination of Gilles Deleuze's *assemblage theory*, commencing with the framework for assembling, *the diagram.* Deleuze begins to define the idea of assemblage through his and Felix Guattari's (1987) use of the French word, *agencement,* and from there derives the concept of *assemblage.* As John Phillips writes, exploring Deleuze and Guattari's seminal work, *A Thousand Plateaus*, "*Agencement* designates the priority of neither the state of affairs nor the statement but of their connection, which implies the production of a sense that exceeds them and of which, transformed, they now form parts" (2006, 108). Fundamentally, the ways in which the connections between parts form wholes is at the crux of assemblage. Although Deleuze and Guattari (1987) begin to describe assemblage in their book, *A Thousand Plateaus*, they present it much more than they explain it. Deleuze in other writings (Deleuze and Parnet 1977), but more so, Manuel DeLanda examines and picks apart its functionality within the real world. As DeLanda writes, expanding upon Deleuze's ideas*,* a diagram is

> a display of relations of force, or of a distribution of capacities to affect and be affected. Since capacities may exist without being exercised (i.e. since they may exist as possibilities) they form a possibility space, and a diagram would display whatever structure this space has. (2006, 125-26)

To elucidate, a diagram outlines the full range of possible assemblages given the elements and the ways in which they might interact with each other.[1] In the scope of this research, the

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[1] I quote DeLanda as he brings together the fragments left by Deleuze into a coherent and more easily applied framework of analysis.

diagram includes but is not limited to access to available technologies (the proliferation of cameras, worldwide web technologies and protocols and other telecommunications standards and the networks they form), as well as social and cultural relationships, the presence of established media institutions and their relationship to citizen journalism, traditions of representation, storytelling and documentary, and most importantly, the people and their presence and actions within the larger diagram. Consequently as DeLanda reiterates, assembling may emerge from this diagram, the diagram being, "a set of universal singularities," or to be more precise, that which "would structure the space of possibilities associated with the assemblage" (2006, 30). So in what DeLanda likes to call his "neo-assemblage theory" or "assemblage theory 2.0," assembling becomes the way in which some of the variables of the broader possibilities of a diagram emerge and combine to create a cohesive and fluid working productive process (ibid.).

It should be noted that assemblages are always in the process of becoming and disintegrating. Part of my research examines the factors that encourage them to form and stabilize for a time, exploring how and why they dissolve and develop into new assemblages. As George E. Marcus and Erkan Saka explain,

> The time-space in which assemblage is imagined is inherently unstable and infused with movement and change. Assemblage seems structural, an object with materiality and stability of the classic metaphors of structure, but the intent in its aesthetic uses is precisely to undermine such ideas of structure. (2006, 102)

Assemblage theory and social complexity steers clear of reflection focused on technology as the sole determining solution and re-centers research, connecting both the human and non-human components (that is, practitioners and digital camera tools) assembling within the variables present in a larger diagram.

New York City, Occupy Wall Street, Assemblages

A telling example of the value of using assemblage theory is the insight it offers into the video practice of Tim Pool, a practitioner whose evolution from citizen to citizen journalist to journalist reflects the complexity, spontaneity and often contiguity of assemblage. In order to compare and contrast the work of Tim Pool, this article will also explore some recent examples of mobile media and video that have been developed in response to the stop-and-frisk policy of the New York City Police Department (NYPD). These two case studies are intriguing in that Pool's practice formed and flourished within the Occupy movement, whereas the experiments in the use of mobile video to capture the abuses of stop-and-frisk surfaced from the dissolution of the movement itself. Both examples illustrate experimental amalgamations between recent technology and political action, offering insight into the practices of the individuals engaged within the spheres of mobile media and protest. Furthermore, these two examples provide a useful illustration of the wider nature of protest and mobile media within the diagram of New York City, specifically examining the range of technological possibilities.

Let us start with the practice of Tim Pool and the naissance of the Occupy Wall Street movement. As the co-founder of the magazine *Adbusters,* Kalle Lasn, an Estonian who grew up

in Australia, played an important role in the development of the Occupy Wall Street movement. The initial creation of the movement began in the spring of 2011, when Lasn and Micah White, the editor of *Adbusters,* started "pushing boycotts of Starbucks (for driving out local businesses) and the Huffington Post (for exploiting citizen journalists)" (Schwartz 2011, 30). In June of 2011, *Adbusters* crafted a poster of a ballerina standing on top of the iconic bull sculpture that stands on Broadway near Wall Street. Lasn and White debated the date that should be affixed to the poster, eventually deciding on September 17th. At the beginning of July, the ballerina poster, along with an email about the proposed occupation was released. With this, a seed was sown. Though perhaps unbeknownst to both Lasn and White, along with the eventual hundreds of thousands of protestors and supporters worldwide, the time was fertile and the technological infrastructure had already begun to align in a number of ways that would allow for a global impact to cultivate. Two weeks after the encampment ended and the spirit still strong, the sixty-nine year old Lasn reflected, "World wars, revolutions – from time to time, big things actually happen. When the moment is right, all it takes is a spark" (ibid.).

For Tim Pool, a twenty-one year old living and skateboarding in Virginia, that spark came out of the blue, on a late September day, as he clicked through countless YouTube videos of Occupy Wall Street protestors knocked around by the police; eventually, stumbling upon one short clip of a police officer boasting that "My little nightstick is going to get a workout tonight" (Heaf 2012, para. 4). Pool has since stated that he had two responses to these videos. He wanted to know who was filming this footage and why it was not being exposed to a larger audience. (ibid.). Inspired and intrigued, Pool bought a ticket to New York City that very same afternoon.

That September, when Pool arrived in Manhattan, Occupy Wall Street was coming together as a people's movement, intent on eschewing any sort of traditional hierarchical decision-making structure. Initially, Pool documented the protests with his mobile phone camera, recording and saving the footage to the memory card, then recording again, repeating the cycle. Soon, using the live streaming application, UStream, Pool began to stream live broadcasts along the lines of traditional news reports, his collaborator at the time was Henry James Ferry, who played the role of the reporter, interpreting what was going on for the online audience at home. Pool soon came to realize that the action of the protests often sprouted spontaneously and having Ferry as a reporter just didn't seem to fit the flow of events. Furthermore, viewers on UStream, who have the ability to interact with Pool via a live chat function, expressed that they didn't care to see a reporter between the camera and the events manifesting in lower Manhattan. As Pool explained to me in June of 2012:

> First of all, he [Ferry] wouldn't use the chat. He didn't know how. He would just point the camera and narrate and talk. And people were like – it was mixed – people were saying we don't- put Tim on, what are you, who is this guy? This is lame. And then people would actually ask me to chat and be like, it's fine if he's doing it just tell him how to use the chat, Tim. And then, 'cause I talk to people while I am streaming [*sic*]. But he wasn't doing that and that just presents the same old same old. Might as well be on CNN, if you're just going to watch some guy talk. (T. Pool, interview, 27 June 2012)

Pool's new form of mobile reportage emerged almost on impulse. He argues that it was instinctual, an abrupt recognition that his journalism had to shadow the emerging protests and actions around him. As Pool reflected that June, "the first was me filming him [Ferry]. And the second time we went out, he couldn't keep up with the group because they were running full speed, so I just took off and took over" (T. Pool, interview, 27 June 2012).

The structure of traditional media, a roving reporter interpreting events for the audience at home, wasn't applicable to his reporting. Even his reporter couldn't keep up with the abrupt movement of the protests. Unlike in traditional news reporting, where the audience isn't offered the power to ask the reporter to just record and thus, cease interpreting what they are seeing, with UStream it was possible and the audience asked for that. Furthermore, Pool's online audience was asking him to remove the reporter from the frame and they wanted Pool to be both the recorder and the reporter, albeit, more like them, behind the lens, with a smartphone, in a sense almost a representative of themselves on the scene.

Pool responded to their requests and used his instincts to record the protests with minimal commentary. At times his live streaming documented police brutality in an unedited form, allowing the viewers to analyze what they were seeing themselves. "Look we've got people communicating with us, but it was really difficult what he was doing," Pool explained to me, referring to Ferry, his former reporter, as "the one way broadcast, like the old school thing" (T. Pool, interview, 27 June, 2012).

It is important to remember that the idea of assemblage is fuelled through the synthesis of present component parts within a diagram. DeLanda uses assemblage to look at various layers and institutions within society and he applies this idea to different spectrums of social activity. DeLanda argues that component parts are often present individually, yet it is their connection to other component parts that allows for elements of a diagram to unite and assemble into a working cohesive unit. DeLanda's often cited example is the evolution of the market. Explaining the emergence of markets and the marketplace during the high Middle Ages, DeLanda writes that this union was:

> an entity emerging from the unification of several provincial markets, each of which in turn is born from the stitching together of several regional markets, in turn the result of the historical union of many local market-places. Each of these differently scaled economic units must be regarded as an individual singularity bearing a relation of part-to-whole to the immediately larger one, much as organisms are related to species. (2006, 30)

Thus in the context of Tim Pool, the technology, the infrastructure, the global importance of the movement, the online platforms available and Pool's practice worked as individual components which unified at the correct moment to produce an effective and influential organism. By the middle of November 2011, Pool's live streams were reaching, "10,000. Then 20,000. Then 30,000 unique viewers. On 17 November, across a whole day's filming, he clicked up more than 750,000 individual viewers" (Heaf 2012, para. 12). Perhaps more importantly, parts of Pool's

footage were broadcast on global television networks such as Al Jazeera and NBC. Furthermore, Pool was sitting in for interviews and commentary on these networks as well.

The visceral news reports in the United States that emerged from the front lines of the Vietnam War are another example of technology and journalism offering a new assemblage within the context of protest movements and unrest. The relatively lightweight film technology available at that time and violent moving images of the realities of war were shared with those who watched nightly newscasts in the United States during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Embedded reporters, recording in the midst of combat, acknowledged both the horrors of war and the value of their mobile reportage from what were ambiguous front lines to a conflict that was equally blurred in both its intentions and goals.

Markedly, Pool's momentary recognition that his audience didn't care for that "old school thing" paralleled the occupation's disdain for customary leadership roles. As Joshua Meyrowitz reminds us, in his book, *No Sense of Place,*

> Changes in media […] may also affect hierarchy by altering the accessibility of high status figures. Media that support the relationship between physical isolation and social inaccessibility will support hierarchal mystifications; media that undermine that relationship may work to lower many high status roles. (1985, 67)

Prasun Sonwalker further reinforces the reassembly of power structures and the citizen journalist's gaze in an age where "the new media and nascent-driven journalism have increased interaction and integration among peoples, institutions, local economies, regions and cultures that do not have much in common, let alone sharing a singular conception of national identity" (2009, 76). Not only could someone sitting in Des Moines or Damascus, Johannesburg or Jerusalem watch Pool's live streaming of the protests online, but traditional news media latched on and stations such as CNN and Al Jazeera understood the significance of Pool's archived recordings and began broadcasting his footage.[2] Traditional media's role as curator in this instance aided the dissemination of Pool's reporting in that his work as a practitioner was receiving worldwide coverage and prime time curation that was shared across cultures, religions, languages, social spheres and borders. The symbiotic relationship between traditional broadcast media and social media raised Pool's profile. Pool was lauded throughout social media as well as appearing in both Time and GQ Magazine, which further expanded the reach and intensity of this temporary assemblage.[3]

The diagram was present for the journalistic niche carved by Pool's video practice; the infrastructure was there – a smart phone, a 3G network, Wi-Fi, a mobile streaming app, blogs

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[2] Presently, Pool's live streams are archived on his UStream channel. Additionally, news channels had the ability to watch Pool's live streams in real time, as well as access them as archival footage for their broadcasts almost immediately. Though understandably, Pool's reflections on the use and re-appropriation of his footage on mainstream news channels allows for further critical engagement in the ethical use of what can often be defined as "citizen media".

[3] A quick web search will highlight the vast coverage on Pool in both traditional media and new social media (blogs, twitter, etc.).

and websites for dissemination. Pool's lightweight digital tools (specifically his smart phone – a Samsung Galaxy II) gave him flexibility absent in traditional media. With his mobile phone camera, Pool was on the front lines, documenting the arrests and police brutality that traditional news makers couldn't access with their large, bulky cameras and reporters dressed in suits. An example of Pool's accessibility is evident in Pool's live stream on October 24, 2011 when the documentary filmmaker, Michael Moore, stood outside the New York Stock Exchange wondering why CNBC couldn't be there to conduct the interview they had asked of him. Pool's archived footage is still online and he films Moore, capturing his bewilderment and frustration. Moore, slightly perplexed, states:

> Ok, um, well here I am on Wall Street, standing in front of the New York Stock Exchange, where CNBC told me to show up, uh today, made this appointment with me a week ago and last night said that they, um, were not allowed to interview me out here in front of the stock exchange. So um, I don't understand why that is because here we are, we're talking, the camera, live streaming here, um, the police seem to be okay, uh, we have our tourists here. We have the spot where George Washington was sworn in as out first president.[4]

The technology with which Pool was working offered new possibilities to a video practice that he created almost by accident – a spontaneous alignment that opened up components from the available resources within a diagram. It is important to note that this type of coalescence occurs often in many societal spheres but rarely attains the status and profile of Pool's work. Undoubtedly, there were other people before him experimenting with this kind of technology, and later, others also encouraged and inspired by his example that did not receive the same coverage and whose work may not have been as far-reaching.

The way in which Pool's practice formed indicates DeLanda's descriptions of "mechanisms of emergence" (2006, 10). Tim Pool's work, his tools and ways in which information, video and news was being disseminated through social media and mainstream forms of media, both knowingly and unknowingly, allowed for "the possibility of complex interactions between component parts," enabling and exercising their "capacities to interact," (ibid.) which essentially explains how the properties of a certain entity interrelate and connect with another entity. DeLanda offers caution and a reminder that "there is no way to tell in advance in what way a given entity may affect or be affected by innumerable other entities" (ibid.) In a matter of days, Pool's practice matured monumentally and his reporting received worldwide attention as it was distributed through other more established assemblages. It is vital to note that technological limitations are also part of this framework. When electricity becomes scarce, as it was when Hurricane Sandy disrupted the power grid in lower Manhattan, assemblages like these can collapse or perhaps morph into something new. The defining characteristics of a territory (such as infrastructure or codes of social engagement) often play a role in the evolution of a practice. Therefore, the specificities of certain geographic locations (in this case, New York City) are elemental to the way that these types of emergent practices may or may not evolve.

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[4] Transcribed by author; see http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/18085885 (accessed 18 November 2013)

Tim Pool's practice surfaced at a particular moment where it achieved a profile and impact that it might not have had at another time. Yet Pool's live streams have different meanings in various contexts and settings. Pool's footage was often defined and redefined, presented and re-presented. One of his clips might have been situated in multiple frameworks on Fox News in contrast to Al Jazeera in comparison to watching an unedited stream from the comfort of one's living room in New York City or say, Dallas, Texas. DeLanda argues that "a component part of an assemblage may be detached from it and plugged into a different assemblage in which its interactions are different" (ibid.), explaining that this is what Gilles Deleuze calls *relations of exteriority.* In Pool's case, not only were pieces of his live streams re-contextualized in different media contexts, but also employed as evidence within the legal system.[5] As Pool told me in June 2012:

> In May, it was announced that the first Occupy Wall Street trial in an arrest case, was, resulted in an acquittal because they used my footage as evidence. So, that's kind of the point. You know, that powerful interests aren't allowed to decide what the past is […]. You've got police officers who lie under oath and they did and that aren't held accountable for it. But at least now we know for sure, the truth. And that's, you know, it's a small step. I, you know, I'd much more appreciate to be able to go back in time and see, you know, every event in its entirety about what led up to, you know, World War I and World War II, even the Napoleonic Wars. Because all we have is what is written by the victors. The people who win get to decide what the past was. And that's what we are led to believe. That's changing. That's the point. (T. Pool, interview, 27 June, 2012)

Importantly, the proliferation of digital mobile media has contributed to both the documentation of protest and the use of these visual documents in various changing and shifting assemblages, often within unintended spheres. Do new digital tools and online platforms, such as the use of Twitter during the Egyptian Revolution or Tim Pool's mobile phone reportage, somehow, through new modes of access and accessibility for both practitioner and audience, in and of itself change the world?[6]   Perhaps all it takes is a smartphone to report and propel a revolution? The British artist David Hockney recently mused in the *Financial Times* for example:

> Such innovations – there are countless others just look around you – are not only changing pictures, but also the traditional mass media, which after decades of immense power is now under siege or simply falling apart. Broadcasting giants are fighting to hold on to their audiences, and their reputations; long established publications, such as Newsweek, are abandoning print. This is certainly bewildering,

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[5] At the time, Alexander Arbuckle was a NYU journalism student who happened to be working on a school photojournalism project documenting the point of view of police officers patrolling the Occupy movement. He was charged with disorderly conduct and eventually he was exonerated with the help of video evidence. http://blogs.villagevoice.com/runninscared/2012/05/in_the_first_oc.php (accessed 8 November 2012)

[6] See Evgeny Morozov, *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom* and/or Simon Cottle, "Media and the Arab Uprisings of 2011: Research notes," *Journalism* 12(5). There are many more articles, books and critiques of recent romanticism towards digital technological determinism.

but it is not necessarily a bad thing. It may even be liberating, as it might deliver a break from the way in which we in the west have, for centuries, been conditioned to see the world, in pictures and, later, in the mass media – namely through 'correct' perspective. (2012, para. 4)

Tim Pool's assertion that his live streaming contributed a different narrative within a court of law and that in the future might add to an alternative history displays an awareness of the importance of digital media that I believe many online-based documentary practitioners are beginning to recognize. Yet equally important, if not fundamental to the understanding of the power of digital mobile media is the acknowledgement that for this media to be influential in multiple arenas, it frequently relies on the assembling and reassembling of crucial components of the diagram. As Simon Cottle elucidates in his research notes exploring the role of technology during the Arab Spring, the task is not necessarily to determine whether or not new media performed formative roles around these political and social movements, "but rather how exactly media systems and new communication networks complexly interacted, entered into and shaped them" (2011, 651). The technology itself, though at times influential, is not the fabled singular answer to local or global protest movements. Defining the Arab Spring, for example, as a Twitter or Facebook revolution is an easy route to technological determinism. And thus when we look back to early claims about the power of radio, an important precursor to the digital communication of today, Evgeny Morozov reminds us that in 1912 Guglielmo Marconi once remarked, "the coming of the wireless era will make war impossible, because it will make war ridiculous'" (2011, 278). If only it had. Yet today, the apparent changes resulting from the Arab Spring are still fluid. Twitter and Facebook are small but important elements to a much more complex and continually unfolding revolution.

Global Assembling: News, Media and Movements

Though the digital handheld video camera and the visual online creativity that it renders are lionized, it is the vital infrastructure that is often forgotten (cell phone towers, software code, electricity, etc.) which permits this confluence of creation. These are key parts of the assemblage. When their contributions are stymied or turned off, different assemblages and in this case, modes of communication can arise. Hurricane Sandy, which affected New York City in October of 2012, as well as, other natural and unnatural barriers to network accessibility both temporary and long term, are reminders that live streaming and digital technology have limits. Infrastructure, though seemingly omnipresent in the United States, is certainly not the same throughout the world.[7] When parts of assemblages break down or are not available, what types of new assemblages arise and take their place? Across the Atlantic Ocean, in Monrovia, Liberia, Alfred Sirleaf "writes up news and editorials on a chalkboard positioned on the street outside his 'newsroom' hut every day" (Allen and Thorsen 2009, 6). Sirleaf utilizes a network of friends as informal correspondents to keep tabs on the important news happening in the West African nation. Sirleaf even places symbols beside the chalkboard to key in those who are illiterate to the general theme of his reporting – for example, a blue helmet means the story involves United

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[7] Within 48 hours of Hurricane Sandy, Cyclone Nilam struck the coast of the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Although far less destructive than Sandy, the cyclone caused a number of deaths, yet "new media" reportage of that hurricane was almost non-existent on all the major websites of the English speaking Indian press.

Nations peacekeepers (ibid.). *The New York Times*, streaming a live press conference by New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, a day after Hurricane Sandy, wondered if the areas without electricity that he was addressing would be able to watch or hear his update. Even the Occupy Wall Street movement, with its media center, constant live streaming and linked connections to social media had to rely on the "the people's mike,' which starts when someone shouts, 'Mike check!' Then the crowd shots, 'Mike check!,' and the phrases (phrases!) are transmitted (are transmitted!) through mass chanting (through mass chanting!)" (Schwartz 2011, 35). So, although the Occupy message was dispersed digitally throughout the world, the paradox on the ground, due to city ordinance, was that any sort of electrical amplification methods within Zuccotti Park or wherever protests might manifest within New York City's five boroughs banned the use of loudspeakers, microphones and bullhorns. As Simon Cottle emphasizes:

> Inflated claims about the power of new social media to foment protest and revolution lend themselves to the charge of media centrism and technological determinism, theoretical optics that obfuscate the preceding social and political forces at work as well as the purposive actions of human beings prepared to confront state intimidation and violence in pursuit of social change. But, equally, claims that simply deny the important role of new media in coalescing broad-based, non hierarchical political movements and coordinating and channeling their demographic weight into real democratic power, fail to understand the changed nature of today's media and communications environment or how this can be harnessed by activists and protestors and creatively infused *inside* political struggle. (2011, 651)

Police, Resistance & Video

While the visual documentation of political struggle was brought to the world's attention during the Occupy Wall Street movement via new forms of digital media, as well as through other traditional modes of journalism and reportage, various activists from the movement and others who live in New York City, yet are independent from Occupy Wall Street, have begun to experiment with recent digital video tools within other areas of mobile media. An intriguing assemblage that coalesced in the months after the Occupy Wall Street movement was the use of mobile video within the context of the New York City Police Department's stop-and-frisk policy. Examining the synthesis of digital video practice, the evolution of an evolving mobile application and understanding the challenges that facilitators and practitioners are confronting within the diagram of the New York City mediascape encourages a broader assessment and critical analysis of the varied visual mediums that surround and inform the visual resistance and documentation to the stop-and-frisk policy of the New York City Police Department.

Since the 1991 beating of Rodney King by a few officers in the Los Angeles Police Department, there has been a long and storied association between affordable video technologies and capturing the public actions of officers within police departments of cities and counties of various regions of the United States. With his VHS camera, George Holliday captured the brutal beating of Rodney King by five Los Angeles police officers. Holliday's VHS footage was sold to a Los Angeles television station and rapidly disseminated throughout the United States, repeated over and over again on news channels in all fifty states. The public outcry over what seemed to be irrefutable evidence that King had been unarmed and beaten to a pulp, turned into

anger when just over a year later the five officers were acquitted in a criminal trial of excessive force and assault. The 1992 Los Angeles riots were a direct response to the acquittal. The decision, which many observers believed to be a clear, documented case of police brutality, stoked a seething anger and frustration within the African-American community of South-Central Los Angeles. The videotaped beating of Rodney King clarified the imperceptible reality that what many believed to be incontestable evidence was in fact not as clear-cut as the moving image implied. As Leshu Torchin states:

> The verdict and the riots that followed became an expression of the different interpretations of this photographic evidence that was deemed unassailable and clear: for one group, this was clearly and obviously an injustice and an act of extreme violence; for another, this represented a controlled activity within the limits of the law. (2012, 143)

Although the five officers were acquitted, the capturing of the beating on VHS has burned an indelible memory into the hearts and minds of the American public and the public servants that patrol the streets and neighborhoods of the United States. The images of Rodney King are forever ingrained with those who were old enough to understand those VHS frames. Subsequently, the memory of that footage has informed the relationship between generations of the American public and the police departments within their respective jurisdictions who remember the moving images from George Holliday's tape. Rodney King's beating also played a role in the creation and evolution of other assemblages within the video ecology, such as the New York City based, yet global non-profit, WITNESS, whose formation was influenced by the Holliday's video.

NYC, Occupy Wall Street and Beyond

In late September 2011, when Christina Gonzalez was arrested in lower Manhattan during the Occupy Wall Street protests, the New York City stop-and-frisk program had been in effect for twenty years. The policy is controversial. It allows for the New York City Police Department (NYPD) to temporarily detain individuals within public spaces of New York City (such as sidewalks, parks and even hallways within government subsidized residential housing complexes). (Turkewitz 2012, para. 2) Although in theory this policy should be evenly enforced throughout different regions of New York City, the discrepancies between the racial backgrounds of those who are stopped and frisked and those who aren't highlights the complex assessment of risk and threat made by police officers in high crime neighborhoods of New York City. One of the many problems with stop-and-frisk is that meticulous reporting by the NYPD shows that the policy disproportionately targets people of color. Although the NYPD consistently denies any sort of racial profiling, the NYPD and Mayor Michael Bloomberg both credit stop-and-frisk with bringing down the levels of crime in New York City. (McKnight, 2012) In dispute is whether stop-and-frisk actually helps stop crime. Not up for debate are the NYPD's annual records (kept since 2002) of stop-and-frisks in the city of New York. In 2002 (the year that current New York City mayor, Michael Bloomberg, came to office), a total of 97,296 New Yorkers were stopped by the NYPD. Of this, 82% were found innocent. (New York Civil Liberties Union [NYCLU] 2013) In 2003, the year that the NYPD began to collect more detailed statistics on each stop, a total of 160,851 New Yorkers were stopped. Of this, 85 percent were either black or Latino and 87 percent were never convicted of a crime. In 2011, 685,724

New Yorkers were stopped by the NYPD. Of this, 88 percent were innocent and 87 percent were either black or Latino (NYCLU 2013). Yet most importantly, the plaintiffs in the class action lawsuit, Floyd vs. City of New York, "contend that stop-and-frisk practices violate the Fourth Amendment's prohibition against unreasonable searches and seizures and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment" (McKnight 2013). In August 2013, a New York State Supreme Court justice ruled that stop-and-frisk violates the constitutional rights of minorities and presents a situation of complex racial profiling (Goldstein 2013). Although this ruling may force the NYPD to change its tactics, the debate over stop-and-frisk is far from over and could potentially make its way to the United States Supreme Court.

The path that led Christina Gonzalez to begin to document the stop-and-frisk tactics of the NYPD began at the height of Occupy Wall Street, when in September 2011 a police officer told her that she couldn't video record a march heading from Zuccotti Park to Union Square. Gonzalez was arrested and her point and shoot camera confiscated. As with many of the arrests during the movement, Gonzalez was held for a number of hours before she was released. As she told me late in 2012, "I was like in the back of a police van with seventeen other people, no food, no water, no bathroom, no windows. We had our phones on us though and we were taking pictures and we were making phone calls" (C. Gonzalez and M. Swaye, interview, 12 September 2012). Gonzalez sent the photographs to her sister, who shared them with one of the news channels in New York City, which broadcast them. Hours later, the NYPD released her and she walked back to Zuccotti Park, "with no shoes on, because I didn't have my shoes, no shirt on. And right away people had cameras in my face and they wanted to interview me. And I did this eleven minute video where I just talked about my experience" (C. Gonzalez & M. Swaye, interview, 12 September 2012). As of late September 2013, Gonzalez's interview has been viewed on YouTube more than 38,000 times.[8]

One of the people who saw the video online was another activist, Matthew Swaye. The two of them had, in fact, met a number of times before. Yet Swaye, emboldened by Gonzalez's energy and spirit, went down to the park and the two of them began to talk. Gonzalez had seen Swaye's YouTube videos critiquing the NYPD stop-and-frisk policy, mocking the NYPD commissioner, Ray Kelly, on his way to an appearance at Columbia University.[9] Soon after that, Swaye and Gonzalez began not only a professional relationship in which they used their smartphones to document the stop-and-frisk tactics of the NYPD within their Harlem community, but they also fell in love. Although Swaye jokes that he's part of the YouTube dating community, he's resistant to the idea that online video within the context of protest does not make an impact. He is adamant that online video is critical for protest movements. "But no one is going to tell us that video doesn't matter," he told me almost a year after the Occupy movement started, "I mean, like, we're just not ready to hear that" (C. Gonzalez & M. Swaye, interview, 12 September 2012). Both Swaye and Gonzalez believe that when someone watches one of their videos, it makes an impact; no matter the response they get from an online audience. As Swaye explained, "our assumption is that a video that someone sees and doesn't comment on and doesn't like or dislike, that's a little splinter of something in their head that they then carry around with them"

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[8] See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2WJvZ1hAno (accessed 17 September 2013)
[9] See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hcOqB06uwX0 (accessed 17 September 2013)

(C. Gonzalez & M. Swaye, interview, 12 September 2012). Though both of them are wary that their work may get lost in the shock value culture of YouTube videos that at times encourage altercations between police and citizen and often reinforce stereotypes through the audience's ability to add stereotypical, racist and xenophobic comments below their posts.

The tools that Gonzalez and Swaye use are similar to those of Tim Pool. They both carry their smartphones with them and when they happen upon a stop-and-frisk unfolding, they often document it independently, though not always. Both Gonzalez and Swaye have their own style of video making. And similar to Pool, who integrates himself into the unfolding action through a dialogue with the people in the frame, Gonzalez and Swaye infuse themselves into the situation, often very vocally. They approach the stop-and-frisk as it is evolving, asking questions to the officers, sometimes interrogating them, very clearly announcing their presence. The two of them are also conscious of the fact that the citizens who are stopped by law enforcement may not always welcome their presence. As Gonzalez explains:

> It's such a mixed feeling when you are out there. You feel like you are doing this service to someone. Or you know, a lot of people. But then at the same time, those young men who were there probably didn't want to be filmed. They're probably like, "Who the fuck is this lady? And why is she here making the situation worse?" (C. Gonzalez & M. Swaye, interview, 12 September 2012)

Their videos are short, typically under five minutes. They are rarely edited, besides slight trimming at the beginning and the end. "We've tried to keep all this stuff as amateur as possible," Swaye told me, elaborating:

> we don't have any, we're not editing in any, any, there's no editing really that takes place at all. We want to just make it as much stripped down citizen journalism, kind of, just stuff as possible. That shouldn't, no one should see our stuff and go, Oh, I'd like to do that but I don't know how to edit. Like, I don't think that's a concern of this generation anyway but, we want to make it so that forty year olds could adopt this as a living hobby too […]. (C. Gonzalez & M. Swaye, interview, 12 September 2012)

Gonzalez and Swaye use techniques that are quite different than those of Tim Pool. Pool live streams directly to the Internet in real time, whereas Gonzalez and Swaye record footage on their smartphones and then return to their home in order to upload the footage to the Internet. The actions and protests that Pool live streams are often much more high profile than say a young black man being patted down, questioned and at times arrested on an obscure street corner in Harlem. The difference, in the general global consciousness of Occupy Wall Street in contrast to the stop-and-frisk tactics of the NYPD in high crime areas of New York City, play a role in the ways in which assemblages emerge from these two practices. Pool live streamed a New York City event that quickly went global, whereas Gonzalez and Swaye continually document stop-and-frisk in New York City, one of their goals is a resolute understanding that if they don't record these moments, who will? The question remains, could there be a moment in the future in which their practice achieves a global dissemination similar to the ways in which Tim Pool's practice spread worldwide?

Both Gonzalez and Swaye understand the history that surrounds the practice they're engaging with, not just the way in which video has been used in the United States to document police brutality, but also the value of the visual documentation of subtle and overt forms of discrimination and racism within the context of America's history. It is in part recognizing the tools to document and the evolution of current and previous camera technologies' place within history, no matter if the work is far-reaching in the present or the future. As DeLanda states,

> The identity of an assemblage should always be conceived as the product of a historical process, the process that brought its components together for the first time as well as the process that maintains its integrity through a regular interaction among its parts. (2011, 185)

Swaye reinforces that clearly:

> I'd like to think is that if Steena and I were bouncing about, you know, during the lynching period, we had smartphones, we'd be some of the few people who'd be documenting right now. And calling it out for what it is and not saying like, "Hey, what a nice picnic." You know, this is not a picnic. (C. Gonzalez and M. Swaye, interview, 12 September 2012)

It is important to note that Swaye and Gonzalez's practice can be interpreted as highly antagonistic. The range of comments on YouTube sways from anger at the police to anger at the video makers. Moreover, New Yorkers are divided as to whether stop-and-frisk is a policy that should continue or cease, many support it. Although similar to Tim Pool's practice, Matthew Swaye and Christina Gonzalez's work has garnered only minimal coverage in local press and nothing like Pool's prolific international profile within protest circles. Pool sees his work as "social media journalism" or an "open-source journalism" yet shuns the idea that he is a citizen journalist. (T. Pool, interview, 27 June, 2012). For Pool, he sees being defined as a citizen journalist not only as a way for mainstream media to avoid criticism for not paying him for his footage, but also as a means of belittling the hard investigative, on-the-scene-journalism that he is doing. Swaye and Gonzalez see themselves more as citizen journalists, even mentors in the sense, with the hope that more people will use the omnipresent digital cameras on their mobile phones to capture stop-and-frisk tactics throughout the five boroughs.

Organizations, such as the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) are also seeing the value of mobile video technology. They produced, along with Jason van Anden (the software developer behind the "I'm Getting Arrested" smartphone application created during the Occupy Wall Street movement), a "Stop and Frisk Watch App" for smartphones that allows the user to record stop-and-frisk encounters. The videos are immediately sent to the NYCLU's computers from the user's smartphone.[10] Returning to DeLanda, he explains that "one factor affecting the range of capacities actually exercised by an assemblage is mobility, since a mobile assemblage is

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[10] See both http://www.nyclu.org/app and http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=jDjZq7l-Zs8 (accessed September 17, 2013)

more likely to encounter novel situations than an immobile one" (2011, 187). This mobility is a further example of DeLanda's idea of *deterritorializing*, a process that, "either destabilizes spatial boundaries or increases internal heterogeneity" (2006, 13). Certainly, experimentation with styles of practice, new media platforms for presentation and capture (such as the NYCLU application) and innovative ways of disseminating work through recent social media and long-established press outlets are producing current and future novel assemblages that have local and global impacts. Even select police departments in the United States are beginning to test video cameras that officers can wear on their person (Stross 2013). It will be interesting to see how this impacts mobile video in the context of protest movements. Additionally, the NYPD has started outfitting some officers with smartphones so that records are at their fingertips, yet perhaps the addition of a camera to their holster will become as vital as the records in their stored mobile database (Ruderman 2013).

Conclusion

For a number of the practitioners, facilitators and media-makers with whom I have spoken in these past few months, the passion to document often comes from a drive that is outside the realm of filmmaking; sometimes it is survival, other times it is the eternal search for truth, other times it is a yearning to challenge authority or concepts of documentary storytelling and journalism. Sometimes it is simply the vital need to tell an important story. While some of these examples are rare and still relatively isolated, assemblage theory does not offer all the answers as to how a set of circumstances aid the evolution of a certain practice at a specific time. Yet though the proliferation of digital video technologies seems to be both everywhere and empowering at once, only a minuscule portion of the world's population is using these technologies in a way that might push the limits of documentary and journalistic expression.

Assemblage theory presents a key-mapping device that allows for an exploration into the dynamic interactions present within the New York City based practices discussed in this article. Examining the video practice of Tim Pool and the visual documentation of stop-and-frisk by Christina Gonzalez, Matthew Swaye and others through the lens of assemblage theory allows for an assessment of the diverse variables that often play roles in the ways in which the relationships between practitioners and tools of practice help formulate nascent and evolving creative video practices. Beginning to analyze these video practices through the wide aperture of assemblage may only produce more questions than answers, yet as this written exploration attests, the lens of assemblage presents rich analysis of the complex interactions between the multiple singularities that can often be hard to ascertain within nascent digital video practices in the context of protest and social justice movements. Though the patchwork of practice and protest are often diverse and different, digital video is part of this mélange of movements and media-makers. Assemblage theory allows for a greater understanding, a way to begin to piece together the varying parts into emerging, morphing and certainly very burgeoning creative digital video practices.

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