Politics, Protest, Emotion: Interdisciplinary Perspectives

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A Book of Blogs

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Introduction

Paul Reilly, Anastasia Veneti and Dimitrinka Atanasova

The origins of this book of blogs can be traced back to 'Politics, Emotion and Protest', an interdisciplinary workshop co-hosted by Bournemouth University's Centre for Politics and Media Group and Civic Media Hub, the Department of Media & Communication at University of Leicester, the Politics and Media Group of the Political Studies Association, and the Protest Camps Research Network. This event, held on 9-10 July 2015, brought together researchers from a variety of disciplines in order to discuss the intersection between power, politics and emotions. Themes of authenticity, nostalgia and sustainability were amongst those highlighted by the workshop participants (see Figure 1).
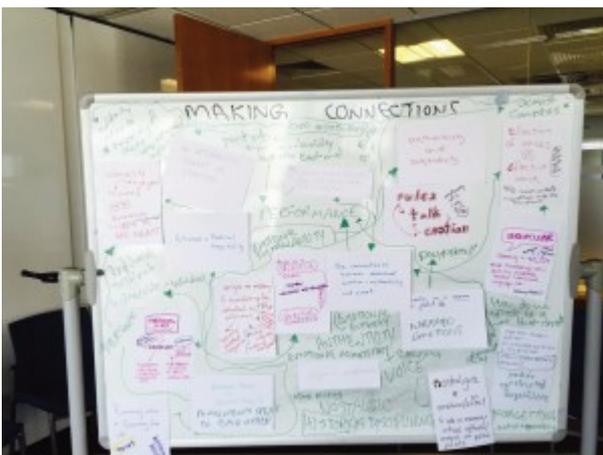
Figure 1: Themes from Politics, Emotion, Protest workshop, Bournemouth University, July 2015

These themes are explored in more detail by the contributors to this book of blogs.

There are five sections in this volume:

Politics, emotion and identity performance presents a series of personal reflections on the 'affective turn' in social movement studies. Case studies such as Anonymous, the Hong Kong protest camps and the 2016 Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) march are examined in order to explore the performance of identity in this era of global protest.

Emotion and the news media focuses on the prevalence of emotional narratives in professional journalism today. Contributors draw on examples such as the nostalgic framing of the past in Japanese media, the role of personal stories in UK press coverage of the refugee crisis, and patriotic reporting of historic events in order to shed light on these narratives.

Women, politics, activism explores how digital media has created new opportunities for women to participate in contemporary protest and social movements. Examples such as the Slutwalk movement, the role of women bloggers in Nigeria, and the Sustainable Fashion campaign on Instagram are explored in this section.

Digital media and the politics of protest examines emotion and political action through the lens of several case studies including so-called 'hashtag activism' in Greece, the anti-TTIP-TAFTA protests on Twitter and the role of social media in the Bahrain uprising in 2011. Contributors to this section also reflect upon how social media (dis-)empowers activists in these contexts.

Health activism examines the role of emotion in disability and other health campaigns in countries such as the UK and the US. The authors consider the extent to which these narratives help engender support for these movements and articulate the voices of patients with a variety of conditions.

The purpose of this volume is not to offer conclusions or recommendations for those readers interested in the affective turn in protest and social movements. Rather, it is hoped that these blogposts provoke debate and reflection in relation to how everyday and extraordinary political actions have become infused with emotion. We would like to thank all of our authors for contributing to this conversation on Politics, Protest and Emotions.

Paul, Anastasia and Dimitrinka

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PART I

Politics, emotion and identity performance

1

Politics, emotions and protest: A polemical reflection

Ian R. Lamond, Leeds Beckett University

What follows is a very personal and emotional response to my participation in the Politics, Emotion and Protest workshop, coordinated by the social movements groups within the Media, Communications and Cultural Studies Association. Whilst it is neither a piece of research, nor an outline of my previous or current research activity, it does – polemically – reflect the impact the workshop had on how I conceptually orientate myself to my working practice as an academic researcher within the field of critical event studies.

Within the cultural political economy of neo-liberalism the imaginary of the *event* is construed as a commodity. Festivals fabricate lifestyle choices, even if only for one muddy weekend in summer, with their associated tat, and are frequently evaluated in terms of increased footfall and visitor spend. Conferences are assessed against the growth of individual and corporate networks, enhancements to individual skillsets augmenting worker productivity or new business contracts signed. Even celebratory rites of passage (weddings, christenings, even funerals) carry associated products and services for sale to enrich the 'experience' of those participating (living and dead). Space itself, within this frame of reference,

is conceptualised as depoliticised. It is conceived as a blank canvas upon which the event occurs – a canvas whose past is erased in some cases, given a dressed and distorted formulation in others, but essentially one that competes with other spaces and can be over-written with whatever the money wants it to be.

In what ways are politics, emotion and protest commonly understood within event studies and events management in such a context? Politics is most frequently construed as a legislative lens through which the 'event manager' gains an perspective on what is and is not permitted within the 'event' space, as well as what constitutes a legally permissible space for any particular proposed 'event'. Performing arts licences, drinks licenses, emergency action plans, pre-set press release templates in case of a crisis situation occurs (such as, for example, the collapse of a stage or the drug related death of an attendee), health and safety plans, and so forth, all frame the political context for the 'event'. Emotion becomes little more than a product for sale within the eventised 'experience'; monetised through merchandising and memorabilia. T-Shirts; DVDs; key rings – there seems no end to the way our memories can be exploited. All those things you never realised you didn't want, are packaged, re-packaged, and sold to us. Even our own documentation of the 'event' becomes an imaginary of space for the fabrication of 'spontaneous' selfie/ photo bombing/ cosplaying/ me with the band/ CEO/ cult TV celebrity (delete as appropriate) opportunities, that are little more than a thin masquerade for product placement and promotion. Whilst protest (dissent) is portrayed as violent, in actuality or in terms of its potential as a risk: teetering on the edge of disorder. An impeding factor that an operationally focused 'event' organiser, within this commercially driven agenda, needs to plan around or mitigate against. Civil disobedience, protest, speaking truth to power, is a *non-event* event within the dominant discourse of event management. However, as a critical event studies researcher my focus is precisely on such supposed *non-event* events.

But 'events' are not things in themselves, they intervene the social; they reveal space to be contested; they show it to be multiple, fractal, nuanced. Neo-liberalism, on the other hand, construes space as a palimpsest, if

the income generating potential is right, meaning can be written, erased and rewritten. It is in the nature of late capitalism to operate as a means of constructive forgetting. What was once a site where workers fought to overthrow the shackles of domination becomes a shopping mall; an entertainment complex; a luxury gym: forget religion – these are the new temples for the opiates of the people.

What 'events' actually do, no matter how carefully any 'event management' tries to contain them, is work like a tectonic on everyday life. The 'event' exposes the discourses at work, particularly those that are attempting to manage the 'event' within a dominant hegemony. 'Event management' becomes an attempt to manage the steerage of discourse, as well as being a discourse of 'management', and space is heterotopic – but only as a heterotopia of the imaginary, so that it can be sold back to those who have had its reality robbed from them. The act of 'event management' becomes that of reproducing and sustaining a dominant hegemony in which the 'event' is taking place. Yet the management of those 'events' conceived as prototypical within mainstream event studies (global sporting events; world fairs etc.) are not consciously experienced as domination, manipulation or reinvention, as the hegemonic dynamics of event management is either overlooked or construed as an irrelevance.

One of the things that drives me as an academic researcher is a real will to conceive a truly critical event studies; one that asks if a genuinely emancipatory events studies is possible; one that problematizes 'event'; that understands that 'event' and the 'event' spaces are essentially contested. A critical event studies that tries to explore and, to a certain extent, untangle the interlaced layers of contestation exposed by the character of 'event' as that which intervenes. My interest is in those *non-event* events, actions and interactions of groups of people, whether social movement or not, that challenge the neo-liberal narrative of the depoliticisation of space. I learnt a lot from participating in the workshop – not the least of which was a greater clarity in understanding that politics, emotion and protest were not an irritating environmental factor to be negotiated, a marketing opportunity to be seized, or a problem to be mitigated. They are central to what a critical event studies should aim

for. Using them as a foundation for its critique, exploration, interrogation, interpretation and values.

Ian R Lamond is Senior Lecturer in the School of Events, Tourism & Hospitality at Leeds Metropolitan University. His research is concerned with the working practices of social movements and how such movements respond to policy change. His work has been presented at several international conferences – spanning disciplines such as political science; political communication, policy studies, critical tourism studies and critical discourse analysis.

2

Affect and politics: A critical assessment

Paul Rekret, Richmond University

If one wanted to locate an origin point for the increasingly widespread adoption of the concept of 'affect' into theorisations of politics, the candidate most likely to succeed would be philosopher Brian Massumi's (1995) essay, 'The Autonomy of Affect'. Working from an intellectual tradition that posits a relatively straight line from Baruch de Spinoza and Henri Bergson to Gilles Deleuze, Massumi's claim is that modern – and a great deal of contemporary – philosophy and social theory is grounded upon privileging a conception of reason or rationality as autonomous from the 'bodily and autonomic nature of affect'. Arguing against what he takes as the dominant view of mind as rational, abstract and disembodied, Massumi draws on the speculative regions of neuroscience to invoke a mind that is situated, embodied, and dependent upon its experiential and cultural context.

Taking this emphasis upon the inhuman, pre-subjective forces and 'intensities of feeling', the venture of theorists of 'affect' centres upon the notion that by ignoring such non-conscious intensities and resonances we fail to understand how decisively they influence our political and social beliefs and decisions. Not only, they argue, do we thus risk misjudging

the effects that the disciplining of 'intensities of feeling' can have on political life, but we also exclude the possibilities of ethical and political transformation that would amount to an 'intensification of self–reflexivity'. The turn to affect is thus taken as an emancipatory theoretical move. In what remains below, drawing on a broad set of different literatures, I seek to problematize this emancipatory claim.

A number of theorists have sought, to contextualise the contemporary predilection for neuroscientific explanations upon which a good deal of affect theory is grounded within broader historical transformations. Meloni (2012) has proposed that the reductionist nature of neuroscientific explanation for social and political phenomena has increasingly come to fill a theoretical void once occupied by the by now bankrupt 'grand narratives' of teleological political ideologies. Relatedly, Melinda Cooper (2007) has argued that the increasing reference by social theorists to the speculative biological sciences uncritically reflects the ontological condition of post-Fordist capitalism. Whether we situate the widespread adoption of affect theory within ongoing desire for global narratives or as a reflection of transformations to capitalist social relations, these sorts of periodising claims signal the need for more reflection upon the historical conditions in which the concept of affect emerges.

Other critics have questioned the potency of effect theory's endeavour to undermine Cartesian dualism. Ruth Leys (2011) has argued that affect theorists reproduce in reverse the sharp dichotomy between body and mind they claim to destabilise. Leys argues that affect theorists presuppose a highly rationalist conception of meaning which they oppose with a broad series of 'unexamined assumptions that everything that is not 'meaning' in this limited sense belongs to the body'. Affect theorists thus imply the very categories they claim to oppose. Moreover, Leys' work (2011) has been central in unveiling the selective and at times erroneous reading of the neuroscience literature.

Recent work from philosopher Ian Hacking also problematizes the emphasis on embodied intellect by affect theorists. We are becoming, Hacking (2007) argues, more not less Cartesian today. Not only do

developments in medical technology imply that we increasingly treat human bodies as assemblages of replaceable parts but our concept of 'brain death' is, according to Hacking, an intensely Cartesian definition of life itself. While Hacking does not explicitly engage affect theory, his argument offers a formidable challenge for theories whose central claim lies in a departure from Cartesian dualism.

As I suggested above, affect theorists tend to view their anti-Cartesian ontological commitments as inherently liberating. But in the main, they offer few resources by which we might think affects that reinforce rather than challenge any dominant order. We have no rigorous analytical or theoretical tools by which we might differentiate between good and bad affects. This lacuna should dampen or at least qualify any celebration of a 'turn' to affect and should give pause to social researchers who seek to study social movements through this concept.

Moreover, affect theorists have not, to my knowledge, offered a rigorous account for how we might think an affective realm that has been almost or completely subsumed by the valorisation of capital. This is highly problematic if, as a number of scholars have come to argue, social relations today are increasingly organised upon and mediated by the capitalist organisation of digital and other media.

Finally, affect theorists have to my knowledge not substantively attended to the ways in which mental and material labor or body and mind have continued to be strictly alienated along Cartesian lines through 21st century capitalist processes of accumulation.

In short, while I think that affect theory has challenged some of the narrower conceptions of a disembodied reason that dominate some regions of the academy, I see substantial pitfalls and limitations in taking it as an emancipatory ontological commitment.

Paul Rekret is Associate Professor of Politics at Richmond University. Before joining Richmond, he was Lecturer in Political Theory at Queen Mary, University of London. He holds a BA in Political Science from the University of Toronto, an MA in Philosophy from the Universiteit van Amsterdam, and a PhD in Politics from Queen Mary, University of London. His current research has two major foci. First, a series of recent and forthcoming publications focus upon the implications of recent developments in International Political Economy. Second, he is currently completing a book-length study of the ideology of childhood in popular culture. This reflects a broader interest in the intersections of politics and popular culture.

3

The psychology of protest

Barry Richards, Bournemouth University

Let's consider a very general argument, one that goes beyond protest to the whole field of political involvement. However we may understand our own politics, it is important to see political participation as grounded in some emotion, affect or feeling (I'm using these words interchangeably here, though in another context they might require differentiation). Moreover, this emotion has to be understood psychologically. That may sound odd: how else could it be understood? To explain, I am using the word 'psychological' in a strong sense here, to mean referring to forces *within* the individual. There would be other ways of understanding emotion that made no reference to any *internal* drivers, and so are not really *psychological* in this strong sense.

For example, the fear of nuclear holocaust, which drove many people into the Ban the Bomb protest movement from the 1950s to the 1980s, can be seen as a straightforward, rational response to an external world in which antagonistic nations have nuclear weapons and an established procedure for authorizing their use. We don't need to ask psychological questions about fear, such as, Why are you afraid? What are you afraid of? We can see the answers to these questions in the external world, not in the mind of the individual.

Similarly, the iconoclastic euphoria of the 1967 counterculture and the protests it spawned can be understood purely in terms of the external environment. The explanation here is perhaps less obvious than in the case of nuclear fear; it requires a sociological analysis of how socio-economic change was reshaping popular culture in the 1960s. A sense of individual freedom, of release from traditional constraints, of life as a search for fulfillment and pleasure, was widely experienced The hippy movement was just the purest expression of this broad cultural trend, so you can explain the involvement of individuals in the countercultural rejection of the existing order as a simple reflection of the times, a direct effect of external cultural change which requires no inner, psychological variables to understand it.

What about revolutionary anger, an emotion we may expect to find at the core of the most radical and demanding protest movements? This is easily seen in a sociological way as a response to manifest injustice in whatever form, such as oppressive military occupation, gross social inequality or endemic racism. If you see much of the suffering in the world as caused by a particular system or set of power relations, then it is a short step to commit yourself to the overthrow of that system. Indeed, your sense of ethical responsibility may mean that revolutionary activism is directly entailed by what you see happening in the world, irrespective of anything about you as an individual with an inner life.

However, there is a large crack in the structure of these sociological explanations. The flaw is simply this: although we all live in the same world, we do not all respond to it in the same way. Why did everyone not join CND in the early 1960s, or 'drop out' in the late 1960s, or join the Marxist movement of the 1970s? Or, as mid-20th century Freudo-Marxism asked, why had the German public acquiesced to Nazism? Why had all workers not joined the revolution which students in Paris in May 1968 were trying to make?

Credit: Danny Birchall/CC BY 2.0

There is a school of thought in psychology which tries to answer that sort of question in cognitive terms, by saying that the differences in how people respond are due to differences in how they see the world, and therefore in how they understand it. So it all comes down to perceptions, to how we construct the world. The problem with (social) constructionist approaches is that they simply displace the question, which then becomes, How and why do we construct the world differently? Why do we select certain information to focus on, and why do we prefer one analysis to another? The answer is that perceptions and understandings are motivated, and that we must turn to emotion to understand the motivations. Our world-views are driven by emotional needs to see things in particular ways and to believe some things not others.

The achievement of the Freudo-Marxists was to break through the rationalistic outlook which had dominated in the Marxist tradition. They could see that argument, evidence and analysis were not in themselves going to build the revolution. Underlying structures of feeling in the proletariat had to be addressed. But the Freudo-Marxist question needs universalizing. Emotional determinants, and perhaps in a sense irrational ones, cannot be confined to those passively *outside* of one's own activist reference group. The complementary question about those who are activists needs posing.

To ask such questions is not to de-politicise the protest action. I'm suggesting a psychosocial approach, which seeks to bring together the internal and external factors, not to cancel out the external factors and so invalidate or de-legitimise the protest, which is what some people fear is going to happen when a psychologist starts analyzing the motives underlying protest. Even if a psychological inquiry reveals that someone is involved in protest for very self-serving reasons, that doesn't in itself involve any judgement on the cause which the protest in question embodies.

Let's take the fear which I suggested was the underpinning of many people's involvement in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). Rational fear of the real possibility of nuclear war was one part of that. But to drive protest action, that fear had to have a compelling urgency. Why were protesters' fears more compelling than those of others? I suggest this was because there were other fears which became attached to the threat of nuclear war. Typically these fears are not consciously articulated ones; in the language of (Kleinian) psychoanalysis, they would be called unconscious *ph*antasies. An unconscious phantasy is a sort of template which can shape experience of the world, similar in some ways to the idea of a 'frame' in framing theory. But whereas a 'frame' can be about anything, unconscious phantasies always involve the primitive forces which psychoanalysis sees as being at the centre of psychic life: desire, aggression, anxiety and guilt. So, our experience of a particular piece of external reality can be loaded with powerful feelings not because of the intrinsic nature of that reality but because we are experiencing it under the influence of an unconscious phantasy.

This can be a dangerous process, if it results in someone feeling more threatened than they actually are. This is shown by those cases of paranoid psychotic individuals murdering strangers because they believe the stranger is somehow a threat to them. And the psychoanalysis of fascism has shown how both aggressive impulses and fears around sexuality can be loaded into an ideology and acted out in relation to particular people, with disastrous results.

So, the question of anger in politics may be more complex than is often recognized….

Barry Richards is Professor of Public Communication at Bournemouth University. After a first degree in psychology he trained and worked as a clinical psychologist in the NHS before becoming a lecturer and taking a PhD in sociology. At the University of East London he led the establishment of psychosocial studies as an interdisciplinary teaching programme and research paradigm, while researching and writing in a number of areas including popular culture, advertising, consumer behaviour, political leadership, and the rise of 'therapeutic' culture. At Bournemouth he has been developing psychosocial approaches in the field of media and communication, and has been involved in research on emotion in political communication, on journalism and emotional literacy, and on terrorism. From 2007 to 2010 he served as Deputy Dean of the Media School. He is a founding editor of the journal 'Media, War and Conflict' (Sage), and on the editorial boards of `Psychoanalysis and Culture', the `European Journal of Psychotherapy and Counselling', and `Free Associations'. His current work focuses on psychological factors and on the role of media in the development of political extremism.

4

Memory and history on the 2016 CND march in London

David McQueen, Bournemouth University

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) rally in London on February 27th 2016 was described in the media as 'the biggest anti-nuclear weapons rally in a generation',attracting tens of thousands who marched from Speaker's Corner to Trafalgar Square. Memories of the enormous 1981 and '83 demonstrations in London, when at least a quarter of a million people poured into Hyde Park,haunted the day. That was at the height of tensions between the US and NATO allies and the Soviet Bloc over medium range 'cruise missiles'. These tensions, declassified documents show, almost led to a pre-emptive nuclear strike in 1983,triggered by a large-scale U.S. military exercise in Eastern Europe called Able Archer. The events were recently fictionalised in the German television series *Deutschland 83,* which continues to promote the Cold War myth that members of the peace movement were naive stooges of the Soviet Union, heavily infiltrated by Warsaw Pact spies (gay spies at that).Some things never change – and history tends to repeat itself when it comes to protest movements and how they are represented (when they are represented at all) in the media.

Credit: © David and Isobel McQueen

Emerging from Paddington Station on a grey wintry Saturday with my daughter, Isobel, who was going on her first political rally, we spoke to two elderly protestors, a husband and wife from Wales. We could tell from their badges that they were also heading to join the march which began at Marble Arch. From their conversation it was clear these were true veterans of the peace movement. They recalled the historic marches of the early 1980s and their first march from Aldermaston in 1959, now the stuff of black and white photographs in history books. As we walked along North Carriage Drive at the top of Hyde Park, they explained to Isobel where Aldermaston was and why they had marched the fifty-three miles from there to Trafalgar Square in London more than half a century ago. It had taken four days and they had slept on the floors of church halls and community centres, before arriving with another sixty thousand protestors at Trafalgar Square to hear speakers call for the British government to dismantle its weapons of mass destruction. As we approached Cumberland Gate, there was little sign at first that this march might be that large. We drifted amongst protestors arriving by coach and on foot, admiring the banners, costumes, masks and signs, and the range of young and old from across the country, unaware that tens of thousands were gathering nearby.

Credit: © David and Isobel
McQueen

The plan was to meet up with my daughter's friends from school, and she found them by Speaker's Corner, next to a demonstration welcoming refugees. This was the corner of London where free speech has been fought for since the huge working class Chartist movement of the 1830s and 1840s, followed by the Hyde Park riots of 1855 and the Reform League demonstrations of 1866 and 1867. The speakers there are a reminder that the right to speak and be heard by government was fought for, sometimes violently,over decades. Indeed the right to speak can be traced back to the tradition of condemned prisoners addressing their final words to the thousands of people who used to gather at Tyburngallows (now a traffic island by Marble Arch), perhaps as long ago as the 12th Century. Tyburn was originally a village which stood at the west end of present day Oxford Street, along which prisoners, including religious martyrs, would arrive by cart to be executed. The 'Tyburn Tree' allowed the authorities to execute a dozen or more people at once and was a fearsome symbol of the power of the King, and later of Parliament. Oliver Cromwell's rotten body was disinterred and hung from Tyburn gallows in 1661 on the orders of the Restoration Parliament.

Credit: © David and Isobel McQueen

History is all around us then, as we set off on the march from Hyde Park sometime after noon. We had not gone far when we were held for half-an-hour half way down Park Lane, two blocks from the US Embassy – scene of a fierce anti-Vietnam protests in March 1968. Music from around the world was being played from sound systems, and a Brazilian group played Samba beats on large drums as we set off again past the Animals in War memorial. This site commemorates the millions of horses, mules, donkeys and other animals that perished alongside countless millions of humans in the wars of the 20th century.Across Britain there are hundreds of memorials to the soldiers of these wars, but, unsurprisingly, no memorials to anti-war protestors, including the 6,000 British conscientious objectors who went to prison or the Russian and then German protestors, who, some argue, really brought the First World War to an end.The politics of dissent soaks the ground of Speaker's Corner,and Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin and George Orwell are amongst the roll call of famous non-conformists who have spoken or listened at Speaker's Corner. Hyde Park was the scene of Suffragette meetings, including a massive rally of 250,000 women to hear different speakers from twenty platforms in 1908. It was also the final destination for 100,000 unemployed men who marched there from cities across Britain in 1931 and 1932 and were violently repressed by police.

Credit: © David and Isobel McQueen

As the crowd turned from Park Lane onto Piccadilly, the size of the demonstration came as a shock. It stretched a mile ahead to Piccadilly Circus and then beyond to Trafalgar Square. Some well-dressed shoppers stopped outside Fortnum and Masons to take photographs, others stared as if the colourful crowd had emerged from a space ship. We stopped by

Piccadilly Circus to watch the crowd go by and then followed them down Regent Street and Pall Mall into Trafalgar Square. I've lost count of how many times I and thousands of others have marched along this route, and many wonder if such marches achieve anything, or are just a chance to gather with like-minded dissenters. CND General Secretary Kate Hudson introduced Bruce Kent, former General Secretary at the height of CND's power in the early 1980s saying how she was a young girl when she attended the giant protests in Hyde Park. Will she too pass on the baton of ridding the world of nuclear weapons to another generation?

The peace rally on August 2nd 1914 in Trafalgar Square, on the eve of the First World War, failed to halt the calamity that engulfed Europe. The rally of over a million in Hyde Park in 2003 failed to halt the invasion of Iraq. Was this demonstration to join the list of protests that governments in Britain have ignored? Yet without those protests we would not have the vote for working class men, women's suffrage, or a welfare state to protect the unemployed. From the Chartist rally of 1848 to anti-apartheid protests, poll tax protests, climate change protests and peace protests, Trafalgar Square has been a crucible for social and political change.

And the 2016 CND gathering in the square, despite the usual, minimal broadcast coverage,also suggested there is real hope for change over nuclear weapons. Unlike the 1983 rally in Hyde Park, this wasn't addressed by a Labour leader (Neil Kinnock) arguing for some half-measure. This huge march was addressed by the leader of the largest Scottish Party, Nicola Sturgeon, the Green Party's Caroline Lucas MP, Plaid Cymru's leader, Leanne Wood and the leader of Labour, Jeremy Corbyn, who all gave full and unstinting support to CND'sdisarmament aims. Only the Conservative Party and a rump of Liberal-Democrats remain wedded to Trident, although the fight in the Labour Party remains divisive. Nevertheless, we are no longer faced with a nuclear-armed Soviet Union and so the age-old argument for upgrading a hugely expensive weapons system at a cost of £100 billion has disappeared. With the collapse of that argument, and with austerity bearing down on every remaining welfare service, the case for Trident can only be made by appealing to irrational fears of invasion or nuclear

blackmail. The reality, as Noam Chomsky reminds us, is that nuclear weapons, along with climate change, represent the greatest threat to mankind, and accidental nuclear war remains as much a reality as it was in 1983. Seeing Isobel enthusiastically take part in the march and listen to some of the same speakers that I did at the same age thirty-five years ago in 1981, was moving. Tony Benn and many others are no longer with us, but my daughter and her friends grasp that we cannot wait another generation for their demand for a nuclear-free world to be realised.

David McQueen is a Lecturer in Politics, Media and PR at Bournemouth University. His research interests include public relations, news and current affairs, political communications and media management. He is currently researching various lobbying and 'greenwashing' campaigns by the fossil fuel industry and the presentation of fracking in the news.

5

Impulsive performative identity: Is it just pointless narcissism?

Darren Lilleker, Bournemouth University

Perhaps like many around 10pm on Friday 13 November 2015 I was dual-screening. Flicking through social media while semi-watching television. Breaking news invaded my dislocated concentration, gunmen had charged a rock concert at the Bataclan in Paris causing multiple fatalities. As the enormity of that and simultaneous attacks on local restaurants emerged I, like many others around the world became gripped by the news, concerned for loved ones as well as feeling compassion for strangers. Twitter became a place for updates. In French and broken English the survivors, those who came to help and the many bystanders began to report events. The band, The Eagles of Death Metal, were reported injured then safe. The number of gunmen on the loose and stories of manhunts were reported in measured and exaggerated forms. Those outside of Paris simply expressed their concern and solidarity. A trend was to have a profile picture blending your current profile with the French tricolor flag. Facebook helpfully suggested if others wished to do that they simply had to click. I did and for a week I demonstrated my solidarity.

Camilla Hodgson, writing in the New Statesman, derided this

phenomenon as a fad; a meaningless act. She argued "If none of your Facebook friends were personally affected by the attacks, then the only people who will see your new profile picture and so-called declaration of support are those who do not need supporting. By changing a photo of yourself for a week, you are doing nothing for the victims; instead, you are making the issue about yourself, by making your public, online persona appear more sympathetic". But is this dismissal missing the point?

It is true that no symbolic act can help the victims, either the dead or the injured, in the aftermath of such an event. But they are sadly not the only victims. Terrorism is designed to make the masses feel vulnerable, to seek to blame others and to seek forms of solace. While there were no reported figures for expressions of solidarity, many in Paris who understandably felt under attack may have felt supported. The simple symbolic act identified a community who cared, caring at least enough to make a public demonstration of empathy. Therefore these random, symbolic and impulsive acts of caring may have had some psychological ramifications. The action may make 'the issue about yourself', but may also have had a wider positive impact regardless of the intentions.

The bigger question is whether these acts are simply narcissistic. Sociologists have long argued that social interactions are representations of identity: through the process of communicating, people are telling others something about themselves. These notions have their root in Judith Butler's theories of performative identity. Butler discussed communication as 'self-making', that all forms of communication are mechanisms for making personality, values and attitudes socially intelligible. While Butler may well have been influenced by the explosion in identity politics in the 1960s, others have considered how the notion of constructing an identity translates into digital age. Rob Cover argued that the uses of social networking sites are performative acts in and of themselves. Firstly he argues that the use of social networking profiles which include information about favourite films, music, quotes etc. is one tool for performing, developing and stabilising identity as a narrative in line with cultural demands for coherence, intelligibility and recognition. Secondly, and more importantly, identity performances occur through

interactions between online friends and so increasingly identity becomes reconfigured. In other words users create an identity but, through interactions with others, the constructed identity becomes adapted to suit a particular set of conventions prescribed by a network. Thus, arguably, as with many contexts of modern society, our identity is personally defined as well as being defined by the norms of those with whom we interact. The challenge when considering social networks is that it is less possible to construct multiple identities, for example one for work, one for particular friend groups and one for family. As a social network online may include many from each of those groups the constructed identity becomes one that might suit all groups with whom we interact.

Therefore we can argue that social networks transcend boundaries and lead to the negotiation of identity bringing us back to the impulsive behaviour we witness. Demonstrating public support for a cause may be narcissistic to an extent. But it is not simply about showing off, rather it is about belonging. Social network users have long used likes and shares as a way of showing agreement. Such functions can be simply agreeing, showing sympathy or empathy, saying well done or a range of similar meanings as appropriate to the post. Changing the way you are seen, via the profile picture, has equally become a mechanism for joining into a demonstration, pink ribbons for breast cancer awareness for example. Such acts, and the inclusion of the tricolor is an example, do not just say a person cares but I am part of a community who cares. It is more of an 'I'm in' than an 'I am' culture.

To write off such acts, which can equally express highly political statements, as pure narcissism misses an important point. The human desire to be part of a community, be accepted by that community and to interact with others and be recognised. Being part of a community involves following norms, capturing a mood or following a trend. Social media may allow this to be achieved through simple acts which despite their simplicity to achieve can have deep meanings, to the person acting and to others who may witness this action. The meaning that goes into the performance may simply be copying in order to belong. But such actions can also be profound and considered. As in the real world, images

can be carefully constructed and maintained through communicative acts. They may appear trivial but that ignores the meanings hidden beneath.

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6

The paradox of privacy on Instagram

Elisa Serafinelli, University of Sheffield

The publicness afforded by social media creates a paradox in terms of citizen expectations of privacy. While many appear to be comfortable with disclosing personal information on their Facebook and Twitter profiles, they remain wary and suspicious of efforts by government to intercept and use such data without their permission to do so. The subsequent need to 'manage' their online persona becomes an everyday activity for many social media users, even though they appear to be unable to guarantee the privacy of their personal information held by these sites.

This reflects the complexity of privacy in the digital age. Researchers should as Miller (2011) has gone as far as to suggest that contemporary notions of personal space do not exist in online environments. Users of Instagram, for instance, appear to engage in a collective 'self-violation of privacy;' they frequently share intimate details of their daily lives and provide personal information, such as their contact details, to a potential global audience. This publification of an individual's private life stretches Foucault's conceptualisation of the panopticon; physical activities such as 'watching' and 'witnessing', now replaced by the use of sites such as Instagram to piece together where people are, what they are doing, what

they ate and with whom. There are broadly three main reasons why people choose to look at photos shared by users on Instagram: for visual pleasure, for imitation and for entertainment.

Instagram appears to function as a participatory panopticon. Instagrammers accept that their photos will be subject to some form of surveillance by other users and engage in these activities themselves. This is what Marwick (2012) refers to as 'social surveillance,' whereby users not only share content with the expectation that it will be viewed by others, but also strategically manage their online identity in order to appeal to an imagined audience. This also leads to what Whitson and Haggerty (2008) refer to as 'the care of the virtual self,' with Instagrammers constantly feeling the need to scrutinise what they, and their peers, upload to the photosharing site. In effect, privacy becomes almost a secondary concern for some users who perceive that being watched makes them 'part of something.'

Depending on the context, users will disclose and redact personal information in order to connect with others, as well as to protect and reinforce existing social boundaries. In some cases this may even involve saying or doing something controversial on social media in order to gain attention from other users. Social media are also widely used as marketing tools for self-promotion by celebrities and reality television stars. For example, Kim Kardashian recently posted a nude selfie (see Figure 1) that generated many media headlines in March 2016. Good Morning Britain presenter Piers Morgan.branded Khardashian 'desperate' and 'frenzied' for sharing the image, which she was forced to censor with black bars due to. Instagram's community guidelines.. These are increasingly normalised behaviours for millions of people worldwide, whose lives are increasingly mediated through sites such as Facebook and Instagram.
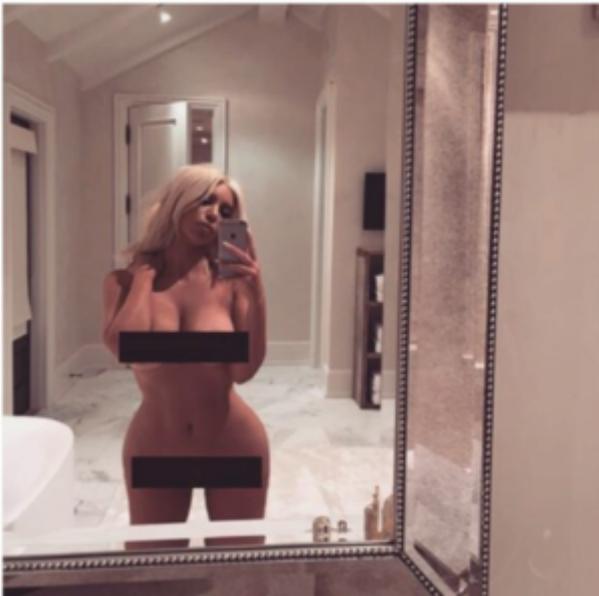
Credit: kimkardashian/Instagram

A related concern might be that users of social media sites rarely, if at all, pay attention to how these companies may use their personal information. Instagram users appear to be only vaguely aware of the terms and conditions that they have accepted in order to use the site, with many admitting to having never read this document in full prior to signing up. Indeed, the majority of Instagrammers appear to accept that they will need to sacrifice some form of personal privacy in order to benefit from the ability to share photos via the site. One manifestation of this is that these users engage in a form of self-censorship of their photosharing activities; photos of locations and individuals e.g. family and friends deemed unsuitable for public consumption are not uploaded and shared via Instagram (see Figure 2).

Credit: Instagram/uwa2000

My research on Instagram suggested that users often display a 'carefree' attitude towards the protection of their privacy on Instagram. For example, one of my participants joked: 'Well, regarding privacy I am totally convinced that once you are on the Internet, just from the first time you get into it your privacy falls down, falls totally. […] I mean, since the moment I signed up on Instagram I have an open account even because otherwise it just does not make sense to me. I say… I am not interested in privacy'.

My findings suggested that there was a passive acceptance amongst users of the absence of personal privacy on social media platforms. Self-regulation was perceived as the most effective way to protect their personal information. The normalisation of surveillance practices online leads users to be concerned only about their visual contents. Interpersonal surveillance has emerged as a pleasurable daily ritual for users of Instagram. While it would be easy to characterise this as a form of voyeurism, my research suggests that this is a purposive act to gain information from the images shared on the photosharing site. Instagram enriches users' visual knowledge of diverse subjects such as landscapes, food, colour, and shapes. The 'Big Everybody' facilitated by social media has seen users willingly sacrifice their personal privacy in order to gain information about the world.
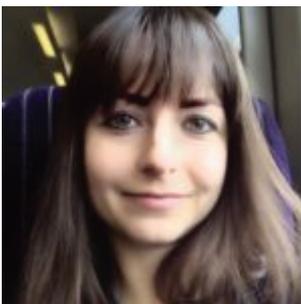
Elisa Serafinelli is a Research Associate at the University of Sheffield (UK) working on the European Commission Horizon 2020 funded project 'IMPROVER: Improved risk evaluation and implementation of resilience concepts to critical infrastructure'. The aim of the study is to explore how information shared via social media can help reduce response and recovery times and raise awareness about the risk of future disasters. She completed her PhD in Media, Communication and Society in 2015 at the University of Hull (UK) with a research project on smart mobile technologies, visual communication and social practices titled: New mobile visualities and the social communication of photography: Instagram as a case study. Her

academic   research   focuses   on   investigating
the relationships between mediation, mobility and visuality in order to
understand how smart mobile devices are altering humans' perception and
visual experience of the surroundings.

7

'The playing protesters'

Pantelis Vatikiotis, Kadir Has University

In its long history collective action has been studied in the context of the social conditions it emerged. The wide spectrum of perspectives on the subject includes reflections on both questions of 'how' protesters are mobilized and 'why' protests take one or another form. Accordingly, a number of variables have been considered in different times: the emotional and irrational nature of 'crowd behavior'; the 'mobilization' of rational actors seizing political opportunities; the creation of spaces of autonomy and 'new collective identities'; and, the transnational character of struggles against the 'neoliberal, globalization order'. What is more, the compelling contribution of social media to the wave of uprisings that shocked the world the last five years, and the snowball inspiration of related protest movements, has favored the study of their 'networked' nature.

The research on collective action has predominantly focused on the instrumental features of the social struggles (political structures, material resources, organization, framing, cognitive aspect of identity), determining their very rational, 'political' qualities. Still, the renewed attention to emotions in the research agenda of social movements the last two decades (see Jasper 1998; Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta 2000) has enriched the understanding of social movements by exploring ways

emotions condition collective action. Being engaged in social movements involves material, organizational as well as emotional dimensions. The recent, global interplays between social and media activism register significantly cognitive and affective elements in their repertoires.

Drawing on the events of May 1968 in France and May 1970 in the United States, Katsiaficas (1987) used an affective term, 'eros effect', to describe the spread from one 'revolution' to another. The current uprisings in different parts of the world, teemed with feelings of 'indignation', set more complex, open-ended intersections among them, and they ask for approaches and conceptual tools that fully address the dynamics of collective action across different contexts and cultures. Moreover, user generated practices facilitate diverse modes of political self-expression articulated on public and private social spaces, enhancing emphatically the realm of civic engagement.

In this regard, the metaphor of 'play' is employed here to grasp the diverse practical and symbolic activities of the protesters. 'The playing protesters', paraphrasing Alberto Melucci's (1996) work (The playing self), point to the ambiguous connection between collective processes and individual day-to-day experience. Prominent is here the account of subjective and intimate experiences in relation to social structural dynamics, expanding the agonistic terrain of everyday politics beyond purposive actions, including non-rational deliberation exchanges too.

The dominant analytical framework of the 'networked movements' starts from the very assumption of the emergence (or not) of another paradigm, assessing, uncritically or critically, commonalities to these movements: the popular nature of the movements (large number of people joined for the first time a protest); the lack of organizational leadership (institutional, formal mechanisms of representation); the role of social media (conveying open/participatory spaces and networking protesters); the occupation of public spaces (central city squares and protest camps functioning as laboratories for the development of discursive practices); and, the overall context, the economic and politico-ideological crisis, of the multifarious protest movements.

However, these approaches fail to acknowledge the diversity of interests and emotions expressed in the different backgrounds. Building on this field of inquiry, the perspective of 'playing protesters' acknowledges the challenges of the intersection of differing and conflicting forms of engagement, including deliberative, active as well as of monitorial, reactive ones. For this reason, research on social movements needs to explore collective action beyond the dominant framework of instrumental rationality. Namely, the research agenda has to be expanded to study the interplay of interests and emotions across different (western and non-western) cultures and along networked platforms of activity.

A number of epistemological and methodological issues are raised here. The study of 'playing protesters' requires first, starting from experience rather than indubitable assumptions, and second, privileging the more processual and relational notion of activity over the western notion of goal-directed action (Lash, 1999). In addition, the evaluation of negotiations of social configurations, formations, identities and imaginaries – regularly and irregularly, privately and publicly, individually and collectively, deliberately and non- deliberately, in mediated and non-mediated terms – that produce multiple meanings and ambivalent accounts of social actors' experience asks for transcending prevalent dualisms (mind-body, reason-emotion) in the research tradition, and to rely more on ethnography and visual sociology to fully capture the fluid dynamics of emotions (Yang, 2007).

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8

Anonymous: A fitting anti-ISIS nemesis after Paris attacks

Athina Karatzogianni, University of Leicester

In a security environment which is extremely precarious, because of the power unleashed by communication networks, asymmetric warfare organized via digital networks is here to stay. This summer, the US was confronted by an Internal department assessment how 'the Islamic State's violent narrative has effectively "trumped" the efforts of some of the world's richest and most technologically advanced nations' (link to New York Times, 'ISIS Is Winning the Social Media War, U.S. Concludes', June 12, 2015), while Europe's Interpol decided to crackdown on 50,000 accounts, as if that would solve the problem: intelligence and targets can be exploited through these users. Although the U.S and its key allies are aware of the importance of hundreds of thousands of messages from a plethora of users on social media networks supporting and celebrating atrocities against civilians, and subsequent radicalisation via inflaming reactive affect in groups structurally steeped in violence, their countermessaging strategy against ISIS is not yet successfully developed.

It is this gap that Anonymous started to fill. Anonymous asked supporters or crowdsourced to identify ISIS accounts to take them down, for example during the @OpCharlieHebdo and brought down Ansar-Alhaqq.net

with a distributed denial of-service attack. In March 2015 (OpIsis) the group collected and published lists of tens of thousands of Twitter accounts, which it claimed belonged to members of ISIS or sympathisers, where 25,000 accounts were published and a list of websites and hosts by GostSec, while a guide was put on Pastebin on how to trackdown pro-IS Twitter accounts. The recent reaction after the Paris attacks is on a similar vein and it has found great support around the world.

It is only fitting that Anonymous has acted as a nemesis against ISIS/ISIL. Anonymous and ISIS are ideological opposites with an organizational commonality: organised networks fighting networked hierarchies. In the case of Anonymous the ideology is one that is open, fluid and horizontal most of the time. As it endlessly flows through rhizomes and travels through digital networks, it eats up many different spectra, so that it can only be pinned down by the nature of the activities of groups claiming the Anonymous network diffuse identity each time.

What can be understood by their activities against religious, government and corporate hierarchical institutions (i.e. US, Israel, Tunisia, Brazil, Turkey, companies such as Paypal, VISA, Mastercard in favour of WikiLeaks, Booz Allen Hamilton, Stratfor, against religious institutions such as Scientology, in retaliation to anti-piracy, but also other online players such as Fox.com, Sony, digital game companies, and paedophile sites)? And why also ISIS?

In contrast to Anonymous ideology, which is decentralised open and fluid (a caveat here on the anti-Zionist plus sexism controversies), ISIS is a network which relies superficially on religion to create an imagined community of believers: a super-hierarchical ideology which differentiates based not on nationality, but on religious affiliation and kinship largely relying on Wahabbism to fill the rest of its existential gaps.

Anonymous have been persecuted for cyberattacks in many countries so far mostly under cybercrime laws, as their activities are not recognised as a form of legitimate protest. Here it is worth mentioning the ethical debate in hacktivism, as some hacktivists see cyberattacks which aim to

take down sites rendering them inaccessible or taking down accounts as not ethical, as it infringes on others' freedom of expression. The argument is that hacktivism should be really about creating technologies to circumvent censorship and to enable digital equality and open access to information.

In the case of fighting against the networks, which murder civilians and claim ISIS affiliation, Anonymous is fighting against groups that act, support or coordinate others to commit crimes against humanity ('We will unite humanity' the Anonymous video after the Paris attacks promises the viewers). Anonymous unite in an ideology that wants to be inclusive and to reflect a common humanity, which embraces open fluid identities which are not fixed and closed down to nationality, religion, and ethnicity. Theirs, on a meta-level is almost a fight against all closures and fixity.

What enables Anonymous to inspire is this collective framing against hierarchizations of race, gender, class, nationality, and religion. Anonymous have been accused of having their roots in misogynistic internet culture, but in their largely fragmented and multi-faced actions the group seems to aspire to much more than that: a common humanity discourse against striation and closure by neoliberal ideologies, corporatization, repression of dissent in authoritarian regimes and the closure of open debate and freedom of information.

Anonymous are the opposite of the coin in relation to ISIS, not just because they take their struggle mostly onto digital networks, but because it is not only their structure that is decentralised, but their ideology too. In ISIS the ideology is exclusive to one view of life, one ethical standpoint based on reactive desire for that life or else Thanatos, which is repulsive, because it is outside our understanding of everyday behaviour and defies any notion of common humanity.

In some respects Anonymous is the vigilante nemesis to Isis in digital networks, especially because of the gap in organising effective communications against the terrorist group. Does the symbolism of

taking down ISIS promote Anonymous' other objectives, collecting sypathizers and support for other activities in the future? To what end? Reports of physical addresses posted online by Anonymous of ISIS recruiters in the aftermath of the Paris attacks pose significant problems for ethics and rights in cybersecurity. Is it reasonable to expect that any countermessaging coalition against ISIS could in fact include collaboration with Anonymous as a legitimate civil society actor in the future despite Anonymous persistent persecution by governments around the world? It is fair to speculate that cooptation is not unprecendented, but in the case of Anonymous, exactly because it is such a complex fragmented actor, it would be hard to achieve. Hierarchies cannot match with their counterparts in networks and that is going to be a problem in any potential dialogue between Anonymous and government and international organizations' cybersecurity and strategic communication entities. And yet, Anonymous has undoubtedly captured and channeled humanity's affective responses in their actions against ISIS over the Paris attacks.

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Paul Reilly, Anastasia Veneti and Dimitrinka Atanasova (eds)

9

'EuroscepticismLite': The Greek verdict on EU membership

George Kyris, University of Birmingham

The European Parliament elections that have just taken place were arguably the most important in the history of the European Union.

The European Parliament has more power than ever before, demands have grown for greater democracy in the running of the European Commission and, above all, the elections provided an opportunity for the public to express their views on how the EU dealt with the unprecedented Eurozone crisis of recent years. And the public were clearly unimpressed.

Nowhere were these elections more interesting than in Greece, the country at the heart of the European crisis.

Indeed, the Eurozone crisis and Greece's two 'bail-out' agreements placed the EU at the top of the agenda in Greek public debate. Policies of austerity imposed on Greece inflicted real pain. The resulting resentment towards the EU and its austerity policies by Greeks captured the imagination of both national and international media: numerous flags of the EU were burned as part of protests that shook the country throughout the period of its economic adjustment.

In theatrical fashion, German Chancellor Angela Merkel's visit to Athens was marked by Greek protesters dressed up in Nazi uniforms as part of an indication of the public anger.

Behind these dramatic images, public attitudes of Greeks towards the EU have hardened. As the crisis years unfolded, so more and more Greeks viewed the EU in a negative light. When Greece joined the Eurozone, 51% of the population had a positive image of the EU – a much higher figure than across the rest of the EU, where support stood at 42%. Just a few months before the outbreak of the crisis, an impressively high 48% of Greeks still viewed the EU in a positive light, with only 16% holding a negative attitude.

Since then, the percentage of Greeks who hold a positive image of the EU has been constantly decreasing. By late 2013, EU support reached an all-time low of 16% – the lowest across the Union. Half of Greeks by then held a negative attitude. Yet Greek support for EU membership has not seen an equally large decrease. This suggests that, despite being frustrated with the way the EU has dealt with the crisis, Greeks do not challenge their membership of the 'European family'.

The campaign and results of Greece's elections to the European Parliament support this analysis. The election debate was fought mostly between two camps: on the one side stood the centre-right New Democracy and centre-left PASOK, the coalition partners for the past two years, who represented the status quo and implementation of the bail-out reforms put forward by the EU, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

On the other side stood the main opposition left wing movement, Syriza, which called for a 'different Europe'. It portrayed itself as the 'radical anti-systemic choice', opposed to the austerity 'policies of the Chancellor' that, according to Syriza, were advanced by New Democracy and PASOK. In the event, the coalition partners saw their support drop substantially, with Syriza securing its first ever victory – though with support from little

more than a quarter of those voting. Other parties calling for 'a different Europe' – including the newcomer River – also made important gains.

As a result, the country which most nearly brought the EU to economic disaster created a mood of Euroscepticism that was different to that in any other part of Europe. In Greece, calls for an exit from the EU did not win many votes. Those parties calling for Greece's exit from the EU – Golden Dawn and KKE (Communist Party)– remain marginal parties, backed by only a small minority of voters.

Greece has demonstrated that it retains deep-rooted pro-European feelings. It is a small country for which EU membership provides an international voice. In terms of history and emotion, Greece sees itself as a country at the heart of Europe, with which it shares and helped forge the values of democracy and progress.

But recognising these factors behind the Greek public support for a European identity does nothing to diminish the anger it has expressed towards the leadership of the EU. Yet it is clear that the mood in Greece is different from that in other parts of the EU where populist parties won support for EU withdrawal.

Unlike the UK, France and some other countries, the Greek vote demonstrates that there is a large population of reluctant Europeans. While they might not challenge their membership of the EU, they do question the type of the EU they want to be a members of.

While the left in Greece has so far failed to promote a credible agenda, its success is important in testing how Europeans feel and this will hopefully inform the debate on the future of the EU. For this reason, 'Euroscepticismlite' is perhaps the most interesting type of Euroscepticism that the Eurozone crisis has so far generated.

Postscript

Few months after this piece was written, Greece saw Syriza, a left party, winning elections for the first time in history in January 2015. The

party choose to go into a coalition with the right nationalist Independent Greeks, with whom they only shared their anti–austerity/ euroscepticism feelings. This made clear the importance of Euroscepticism for the country and Europe. Indeed, eurosceptic parties far away from the left, like the National Front in France or UKIP in the UK, were amongst the first to congratulate Syriza after its victory. Yet, after a year in power, Syriza did not manage to put forward an alternative, had an embarrassingly bad performance in EU circles and ended up signing yet one more bailout programme with its creditors, exactly the opposite of their election manifesto. Does that mean that euroscepticism in Greece failed to make a positive change? Yes, the 'reluctant Europeans' that wanted a change within the EU must be pretty disappointed. Does that tell us anything about euroscepticism in more general? Maybe. Greece did teach us that parties at the fringe of politics (and this where eurosceptic parties come from) could make a breakthrough into mainstream. Yet, it also showed us that the lack of experience and agenda that comes with fringe politics is a major obstacle towards promoting change, especially during moments of crisis. The irony, of course, is that euroscepticism will thrive mostly in times of crisis.

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comment for media like the *Guardian, EurActiv, EUObserver* and the *BBC* TV and radio.

10

The Hong Kong Protest camps, political art and the emergence of emotions

Georgios Patsiaouras, University of Leicester and Anastasia Veneti, Bournemouth University

The city of Hong Kong is considered as one of the world's largest and immensely populated metropolitan cities, a prominent financial and cultural center, famous for its excellent food and emblematic skyscrapers which offer a breathtaking view to millions of visitors and tourists every year. Some years ago, few people could guess that this special administrative region of China would attract world's attention due to the sit-in protests of 2014, also known as the Umbrella Movement. In a nutshell, the protests took place between September and December 2014 since Beijing's administration decided in the summer of the same year to announce a substitute electorate framework which threatened Hong Kong citizens' ability to democratically elect their leaders through universal suffrage.

For a period of three and half months – which involved both police brutality and increased tension with the government – thousands of protesters occupied the main arterial routes of the city, creating three main

protest camps. In general, the causes, actions and outcomes of Umbrella Movement can be approached through the prism of several disciplines – such as politics, media or sociology for example – however in this blog we focus and discuss how protesters' artistic creativity was employed so to create emotions to the audience and engage them with the collective aims of the movement. One of the authors of this blog spent a week in Hong Kong protest sites observing and photographing protesters' creative activities and we include a couple of images which depict protesters' efforts not only to attract passengers' and tourists' attention but also to invite them to participate in the production of protest artwork. In order to protect the anonymity of the protesters, one image captures from distance the main protest camp and the second focuses only on artistic installations.

Below the skyscrapers of the main business district, the Occupy Admiralty site turned into the centre of protesters' creative activities (see Figure 1). Entering the site someone observes banners, tents and dozens of yellow umbrellas – which turned into the iconic symbol of the movement –and appeared in various forms such as artistic installations including a large canopy, the sculpture of the Umbrella Man and origami art amongst others.

Figure 1: Hong Kong protest camp, November 2015; Credit: © Georgios Patsiaouras

Apart from the use of the iconic umbrella as emblem of the movement, the revolutionary anthem from the musical 'Les Miserables' titled "Do you hear the people sing' had been playing in the protest camps offering

a sense of unity and solidarity towards protesters' causes. One of the most popular sites of the Umbrella Movement had been the Lennon Hong Kong Wall which could be found at the central protest camp. A huge empty wall was used as platform of artistic expression where everyone could post-it notes such as messages of commonality towards the movement including epigrams, graphics and messages in foreign languages (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Lennon Hong Kong Wall, November 2015; Credit: © Georgios Patsiaouras

Additionally, street painting events by local artists were inviting local protesters, tourists and passengers to participate in the creation of canvases which depicted the city of Hong Kong, the main aspects of the protest movement and messages related to democracy and freedom.Furthermore, few artists were publicly producing blind contour drawing within the main protest site using pre-printed pages including short pro-democracy, freedom and peace quotes from personalities such as Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Ghandi and John Lennon. Social media and in particular Facebook pages had also been used as means of depicting everyday life in Hong Kong during the protests focusing on individuals' stories. As a passenger and observer of the protest site, I noticed that within this experiential context of artistic creativity and co-creation many passengers and tourists were gradually feeling that they were becoming part of it.

In general, several political organizations and communities have

employed artwork so as to encourage activism or social awareness for example. From the Occupy Movement's artistic installations to Urban Arts Work in Seattle for the support of mid-level juvenile offenders and the Chicago Public Art Group for the promotion of community history, we observe the efforts of these groups to create emotions, communication and engagement with their audiences. Nevertheless, we can argue the most prominent feature of the Hong Kong Movement had been the spontaneity, improvisation and authenticity characterizing the production, promotion and co-creation of artwork. Thereupon, we observe the emergence of a dynamic movement and protest phenomenon that was developed within a period of three months despite the fact that it was lacking a central organized committee. The formation and display of outdoor artistic galleries – within the perimeter of barricaded streets – emerged impulsively and communicated to passengers elements of uniqueness, genuineness and sincerity as regards protesters' aims. As the renowned artist Gerald Brommer said "without emotional content we make pictures; with it, we create art." Conclusively, it can suggested that the Umbrella Movement artwork can be viewed as a very prominent example of how a group of protesters can reduce – but not alleviate – the complexity of ideological and political messages by infusing practices of audience's engagement and emotional elements within their artistic production communicating universal values such as freedom, democracy and justice.

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PART II

Emotion and the news media

11

Past, media, and protest: The Japanese media's nostalgia for the recent past

Katsuyuki Hidaka, Ritsumeikan University

The number of Japanese media representations of a deeply nostalgic longing for the Japanese heyday of the economic boom in the 1960s and occasionally the 1970s has recently flourished. This phenomenon has been called the 'Shōwa thirties boom' (*Shōwa sanjyū nendai būmu*) or 'Shōwa thirties nostalgia' (*Shōwa sanjyū nendai nosutarujia*), as the 1960s in the Gregorian calendar corresponds to the third decade of the Shōwa (Hirohito) Emperor's reign (1926–1989).
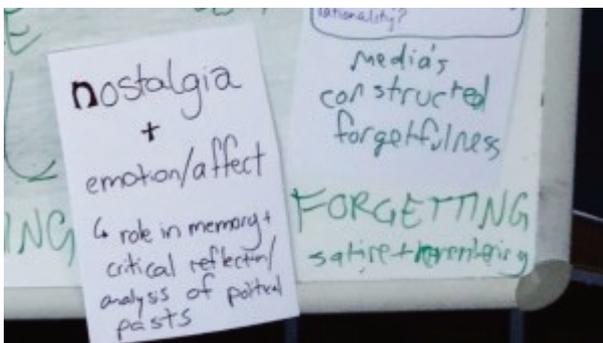
Credit: Politics, Emotion and Protest Workshop, Bournemouth University, 9-10 July 2015

Remakes of 1960s' and 1970s' television dramas, and recent drama serials that copy the style of the Shōwa 30s have also gained in popularity. Moreover, recent years have seen the production of a number of television documentaries, magazine articles, and popular songs that focus on the 'glory' of that period.

Shōwa nostalgia has been frequently discussed in Japanese journalism, but most of these discussions are problematic because of the many unspoken assumptions and presuppositions therein. It is presupposed, for example, that Shōwa Nostalgia causes this time period to be regarded in a positive light. Journalists admire this time period, and often compare it with the present. There is a presupposition that Shōwa Nostalgia is harmless and naive. There is also a presupposition as to why the only periods highlighted are the Shōwa 30s and 40s.

It is worth noting that not only journalists but also academics scarcely doubt the prevailing belief that the Shōwa 30s was a favourable period during which people's private lives were overflowing with happiness due to the economic boom. Of course, some academics are sceptical about the prevailing belief; however, what is important here is that both scholars who glorify and criticise that time period share the preconceived notion that nostalgia-evoking media and cultural products have a high regard for the Shōwa 30s.

Therefore, they show little interest in analysing the narratives of these products, which has led to the absence of a detailed analysis of Shōwa nostalgic media and cultural products. For this reason, I have been conducting an in depth investigation of Showa nostalgic films and television programmes.

In my research, I demonstrate that the representations of Showa periods in nostalgic media and cultural products are entirely different from the arguments of journalism and intellectual discourse. Media and cultural products that seek to invoke a sense of nostalgia resist the real history of Japan—particularly its post-1960s' history—while superficially expressing a yearning for that period in stereotypical terms. In other words, a sense

of antagonism towards Japan's post-war history may have prompted these nostalgic media producers to create a revisionist historical narrative of Japan's post-war society or a counter-narrative to the dominant understanding of Japan's post–war development.

What is important here is that the sense of antagonism towards Japan's post-war history, as reflected in popular culture products, is in fact related to the current rise of the protest movement in Japan. Since the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake and Fukushima Nuclear Plant disaster in 2011, the antinuclear power movement has been increasingly active, as has been the protest movement against the incumbent Abe cabinet, particularly against the policy of constitutional change.

These protest movements have in common that they all critically review Japan's post–war society and it is worth noting that not a few film directors, pop musicians, and manga artists of these cultural products are members and even leaders of these protest movements. In this regard, these movements are in fact related to Showa nostalgic popular culture products, and these two shape an important political and cultural trend in contemporary Japan.

I would like to mention some contentious areas here. First, as far as Showa nostalgia is concerned, similarities exist between the arguments of journalists, intellectuals, and politicians. Furthermore, in my opinion, there appears to be a form of 'unconscious collusion' between these outlets. This 'unconscious collusion' is evident in the fact that they consider the 1960s and '70s in Japan to be the 'good old days'. This is most likely because it is advantageous for them to justify Japan's post-war society and ignore the numerous social contradictions and antagonisms. These similarities between the arguments of journalists, intellectuals, and politicians are extremely important, not least because they appear to actually be related to the Liberal Democratic Party's very long and independent rule of Japan.

Secondly, there is a large dichotomy between the arguments of journalists, intellectuals, and politicians and the representations found in popular

culture products such as films, television dramas, and music. The films, television programmes, magazines, and theme parks that play upon nostalgic themes do not proudly boast of the results of Japan's unprecedentedly sharp economic boom in the post-war period; rather, they tend to adhere to an incomplete picture of Japan's economic development. What they involve is not a simple yearning for the life of decades past but an amalgam of love and hatred for the recent past and memories—a mixture of regret, discontent, and nostalgia. In any case, we can observe the massive political polarisation by investigating these representations and real life politics.

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12

Emotional narratives in the tabloid press

Jen Birks, University of Nottingham

Tabloid journalism is often disparaged for its use of emotional rhetoric, as a sensationalised, 'dumbed-down', and 'soft' form of news that is contrasted with the serious and dispassionate business of 'hard' news. Where tabloids appeal to base fears and prejudices against marginalised groups such as immigrants and welfare 'scroungers', this is clearly problematic. However, there are times when they attempt to use emotional narratives in a more political way that shares some characteristics with broadsheet investigative journalism and the more muckraking end of New Journalism, using human interest stories as forms of testimonial against official claims about social reality.

Recent scholarship has noted the lack of political challenge to the austerity agenda in the quality and public service sectors of news media, where the need for cuts has been broadly accepted as necessary. News media generally present cuts to welfare in particular as being supported by 'the public'. However, in the wake of the Welfare Reform Act, the Daily Mirror and Sunday People, both owned by Trinity Mirror, ran campaigns in opposition to the 'Bedroom Tax', as opponents labelled the cuts to housing benefit for those deemed to have a 'spare bedroom'. Both papers

are centre-left leaning and Labour-supporting, though the Sunday People takes less interest in political issues in general and protest in particular, whilst the Mirror has been supportive of public sector strikes.

Credit: paul bevan/Flickr/CC BY 2.0

The basis of opposition to the policy was moral more than practical, so the 'evidence' presented to support the criticisms was of social injustice, something felt intuitively more than dispassionately calculated. Both campaigns focused primarily on anger as a politically motivating emotion. At first this anger was attributed to politicians, and then increasingly to readers responding to the campaign, principally in letters to the editor. The papers found some support in opinion polls that seemed to be shifting in their favour, but also took protest seriously as an expression of public outrage. Anger was also attributed to those affected by the bedroom tax, and despite being described as victims, they were not denied agency as is more typical in such campaigns.

The narratives of suffering aimed to legitimise a demand for political action. The newspapers encouraged affected individuals to write to MPs and even the Prime Minister setting out their case. However, these emotive tales of bedrooms used to house specialist medical equipment or kept as shrines to dead children were then treated as isolated cases that did not constitute a challenge to the policy as a whole. Government ministers were able to respond emotionally appropriately with sympathy and concern to discursively shut down the argument without actually doing anything. Commentators and letter writers accused them of being

heartless – questioning the emotional authenticity of those platitudes – but to little effect.

Bakhtinian narrative theory suggests that emotional personal narrative can be useful in disrupting the dominant social narrative from within, by fitting into a dominant understanding but shifting it. In this case, the idea that politicians are out of touch with the lived reality of 'ordinary people' is practically common sense in the mainstream media, but depicting welfare claimants as equally legitimate subjects as 'hardworking taxpayers' is rather more radical. The danger, though, is that the narrative can degenerate into melodrama and lose the potential for structural critique. Yet in opinion columns, editorials and letters to the editor, there *was* a significant amount of explicit class politics, including accusing the government of setting the 'working poor against the workless poor'.

Even Habermas – the great rationalist – has occasionally admitted that reasoned argument will not always be persuasive, and there may be a case for civil society groups thematizing and dramatizing issues to show why they are important. The danger with focusing on the suffering of victims, is, on the one hand, to speak on their behalf, and on the other to focus on their suffering over other more political emotions. For Deborah Gould, the political work is in transforming the affective response to marginalisation and exploitation into mobilizing emotions of indignance and outrage rather than shame. It is possible that taking seriously 'victims' objections to the policy (via the practical and emotional impact on their lives) could achieve that goal, through public support and solidarity.

On the other hand, the policy is criticised as unfair rather than unjust, which is a more meritocratic sense than one based in equality, and tends towards a focus on 'deserving cases' (such as the bereaved, disabled and militarily deployed) which could undermine the attempt to challenge the stigmatisation of welfare recipients as a whole. In individualising the issue, such a focus could reinforce the dominant narrative that responsibilizes the victim as a neoliberal subject. Whilst a more collective voice might be more effective in articulating class opposition and broader public

solidarity, however, the aggregate of such stories over time must surely help to counter the more sensationalised tabloid narrative of large families living in mansions at public expense.

Jen Birks is an Assistant Professor in Media and Political Communication at University of Nottingham. She is the author of News and Civil Society (Ashgate, 2014), and writes on publics and protest in news media.

13

Personal stories let us know what it means to be a refugee

Maria Rovisco, University of Leicester

As Europe struggles with a humanitarian crisis the like of which it hasn't seen for decades, the media coverage of the refugees dying to get to the continent has been changing in tone.

At the beginning of August 2015, news of a 'swarm' of migrants causing travel chaos and nuisance to British holidaymakers in Calais got the bulk of the attention. By the end of the month, the term "migrant" had mutated into a pejorative term to classify these people.

Since then, there has been a remarkably reflective discussion of the appropriate labels to describe different experiences of migration and asylum. Al Jazeera, for one, made a well-publicised decision to use the term 'refugee' in place of 'migrant' when talking about the crisis in the Mediterranean.

Labels and terminology do, of course, matter. They help us understand, for example, why people who flee war and persecution have the right to claim asylum, while others seek jobs in other countries purely for economic reasons.

Admittedly, as David Marsh recognises in his piece for The Guardian, 'the term is badly tarnished after years of abuse by those who seek to strip refugees of their humanity'.

That much is certainly open to debate, but it's not the whole story. The way we really dehumanise refugees is not by wrongly labelling them 'migrants', but by denying them a voice.

Beyond counting

Until the world saw a tragic photograph of a drowned boy, Aylan (Alan) Kurdi, the reporting of the 'migrant crisis' in the mainstream media was dominated by debates about whether the numbers of people seeking to enter Europe are sustainable.

Writing in the Sunday Times, the home secretary, Theresa May warned of the 'consequences of uncontrolled migration on wages, jobs and social cohesion of the destination nations'. The British government has changed tack somewhat since the Kurdi picture, but the terms of the discussion haven't really changed. David Cameron's response and the discussion of it are still a matter of numbers, not lives.

This is not surprising if we accept, as argued by the anthropologist Liisa Malkki in her book Purity and Exile, that public discourse routinely frames refugees as a pathological challenge to the 'national order of things', one that requires preventative and curative measures.

Credit: Mstyslav Chernov/CC BY-SA 4.0

Media coverage of the crisis remains firmly focused on the impotence of European leaders in face of 'unprecedented numbers' of deaths, arrivals, and people taken by particular countries. As Gavin Hewitt put it in a piece for BBC News online: 'The crisis has overwhelmed Europe's leaders. There is no plan'.

These discussions do nothing to explain why people risk their lives to seek asylum. We need to move beyond what Martina Tazzioli calls 'the politics of counting'. Treating asylum seekers and migrants as statistics not only strips them of their humanity, but also reduces them to the condition of voiceless and helpless victims. The personal stories of those who seek solace in Europe remain blithely ignored and unreported in the mainstream press.

One rare example of writing that takes into account the perspectives of those who find themselves displaced by conflict was an Owen Jones piece in the New Statesman. The headline read: 'Owen Jones talks to Calais migrants: They forget we are human.'

In it, Jones tells the story of Habib, who comes from Jalalabad, and hopes of returning to the UK after being deported. We learn how Abdul, from Sudan, saw his village burned to the ground by an Arab-supremacist militia. Through these snippets of personal stories we gain new insight into how these young men find themselves 'caught up in very difficult situations'. But we also learn that there's courage and dignity in their stories.

Voices matter

We need more news stories told from the perspective of those who attempt to reach Europe in suffocating trucks, overcrowded trains and sinking boats, rather than from the perspective of those who do the counting.

We need more narratives that give voice to the individual experiences of asylum seekers, refugees, first and second generation migrants. We need

stories that communicate just what it means to live in a world that treats people in dire need this way.

Only with stories like these can we foster a deeper understanding of the appalling disparity between different people's fortunes in and around Europe where some highly skilled migrants are able to swiftly move jobs across borders while others risk death to reach the continent's shores.

There are encouraging signs. A fast-growing new clutch of grassroots petitions and solidarity campaigns suggest that public sympathy for the plight of forced migrants and refugees has reached a tipping point. If the numbers of migrants are unprecedented, so is the outpouring of compassion.

This could be the start of a whole new debate on refugees and migrants – and the way we should treat them as humans, not numbers.

Maria Rovisco is a Lecturer in Media and Communication at the University of Leicester, UK. She has published articles on cosmopolitan cinema, cosmopolitanism and religion, and on the cultural borders of Europe and globalization. She is currently researching the relation between migrant arts, citizenship and public life as well as the relation between new activisms and the mediation of protest. Among her recent publications are the co-edited books *Cosmopolitanism in Practice* (Ashgate, 2009), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Cosmopolitanism* (Ashgate, 2011) and *Cosmopolitanism, Religion and the Public Sphere* (Routledge, 2014) and *Taking the Square: Mediated Dissent and Occupations of Public Space* (Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016).

14

West's crisis of communication will make terrorist atrocities more likely

Emma L. Briant, University of Sheffield

Already the tremors of recent days are shaking fear-fuelled ideologies out of the woodwork. In the US, senator Marco Rubio renewed talk of a 'clash of civilisations'. Political and media rhetoric of this kind simply amplifies the terrorists' power by claiming that they represent an entire 'civilisation', generating fear and therefore the impact of their atrocities.

Such rhetoric risks alienating moderate Muslims, producing 'us v them' polarisation and calls for the harsh retaliations that the terrorists are seeking to bolster their recruitment drives. Sadly, the minimal press coverage given in the West to recent terrorist attacks in Iraq and Lebanon aids those trying to pretend that this is violence perpetrated by Muslims against non-Muslims, rather than showing us the reality of shared victimisation.

We will continue to fail in fighting violent extremism if we do not begin by addressing the real-world circumstances on which it is founded, including inequality, poverty and social injustice. In the UK, the right–

wing media and political opportunists have also predictably attempted to hijack the tragedy to push an anti-immigration agenda and fear is being spread by the militarisation of policing on our streets and imagery that recalls Nazi propaganda at its worst.

Iain @Cuphook108 Follow

One is a Nazi cartoon laughing at Jews denied entry to democratic countries. The other is the Daily Mail today.

10:27 AM - 17 Nov 2015

16,330   5,964

It is sadly predictable that the scapegoats being blamed en masse for the Paris attack are the refugee victims of Islamic State, something IS clearly intended. As my research with Glasgow Media Group shows, media misrepresentation of refugees and migrants is nothing new and has been used to drive through legislation that has hampered integration in our communities, including austerity cuts to public services, harsher conditions for migrants and attacks on the Human Rights Act.

In this climate, calls to close borders and blame refugees for the problems that they too are seeking to escape, may score easy points for some politicians or sell papers in the wake of an attack, but they won't deal with the problems which led to the rise of IS and the recent migrant crisis. In fact, such calls actually distract us from the foreign policy failures that fuelled the rise of IS and have driven forced migration to Europe. The media's bolstering of anti-migrant feeling also prevents resources going to help allieviate the poverty that makes refugees so vulnerable to exploitation.

New ideas needed

While I was researching my recent book: "Propaganda and Counter-terrorism: Strategies for Global Change" I interviewed journalists, PR professionals and foreign policy, defence and intelligence personnel from the US and UK. It worried me that over the past 14 years, US and British

government propaganda strategies and counter-terrorism policies appear to have been produced and reproduced in a bubble. Strategy is informed by a small circle of government-funded or affiliated terrorism experts, think-tanks and academics – with similar ideas and objectives.

Credit: Jacky Naegelen/REUTERS

These experts – and, of course, the politicians they advise – are over-reported in the media, too. This leads to the recirculation of the same ideas that have repeatedly failed us. The latest example of this is the UK government's Prevent strategy – an ill-conceived programme which has been criticised by teachers, academics and NGOs for its harassment of Muslim communities.

Such strategies increase tensions in our communities, stifle academic freedom in schools and universities and increase feelings of alienation among Muslims in the UK. The all-too-frequent refusal of both the British and US governments to listen to independent social science stifles their understanding of the causes and therefore solutions for dealing with terrorism.

'Huge disconnects'

The bubble in which US and UK governments' counter-terrorism policies have been created perpetuates a model of communication that is doomed to fail. For the book, former CENTCOM commander, Admiral William Fallon told me that the 'huge disconnects' that exist in understanding can be addressed in Iraq through 'messaging'. He said:

'You've got to start figuring out how you're going to get in the people's heads to get them to do what you want them to do'.

Both media and policymakers repeatedly ask: 'How can we win the propaganda war?' By reissuing the same old calls for the same failed strategies? I would argue not.

Top-down propaganda and a refusal to 'listen' cannot create lasting peace and stability. It divides us and prevents intercultural understanding.

In 2009, Colin Powell's former chief of staff, Lawrence Wilkerson, stressed to me how skillful General David Petraeus (who succeeded Fallon as chief of CENTCOM) had been in his use of statistics and propaganda that had 'lulled us into taking Iraq off the front page', distracting public scrutiny while Wilkerson could see that: 'Iraq has not changed, majorly, in terms of its political disposition and where it might go into the future'.

Chilling words, given the subsequent rise of Islamic State. The lack of transparency and debate has facilitated the developing crisis and greater understanding of the value of independent academic expertise would, in the long term, produce more robust solutions.

What we need is to see how recent events have been fuelled by our own flawed policies and a media that focuses less on headlines than showing us the truth.

Emma Briant is Lecturer in Journalism Studies at the University of Sheffield. Her research interests are in the areas of propaganda, influence and censorship in the US and UK, war reporting, counter-terrorism and governmental adaptation to a changing media environment. Her doctoral research examined Anglo-American counter-terrorism propaganda and 'strategic communication' since 2001, which is now the subject of her new book Propaganda and Counter-terrorism: Strategies for Global Change. Her other recent published research includes analyses of media coverage of

disability and asylum in the UK with the Glasgow Media Group where she worked before coming to Sheffield.

15

Journalism and history: Either 'patriotic' or truthful

Andreas Anastasiou, University of Leicester

Natalie Fenton comments on claims that the internet is 'an organizing model for a new form of political protest', but she also draws attention to Gramsci's view, that forms of protest such as 'the scream' are not necessarily 'truly political'. They can appear to be expressed in a political vocabulary, yet they are rather emotional, unfounded in rational terms, I would add. Although Fenton aims to offer a strong argument in favour of including radical or left-wing politics as an important factor in any analysis of protest and digital media, I suggest a broader and more general reading of her interesting analysis. Thus, for the purpose of the present note, I propose that we keep the possibility of some protesting views being more emotional and less political; based more on myth and imagination rather than on verifiable information.

Complementing these suggestions, and certainly extending them outside Fenton's framework of radical politics, Mojca Pajnik and John D. H. Downing indicate that one should not equate 'alternative' politics or 'alternative' media to progressive or radical ones. Hitler's Nazist regime in Germany and Khomeini's 'brutal theocracy' in Iran used the then

alternative media and political tactics to persuade the public and establish themselves. Today, the authors explain, 'mechanisms that are supposedly conducive to the democratization of society are seen as those which can also function as mechanisms for the exclusion of citizens, for example in the case of the spread of racism and xenophobia via new media'.

What, in socio-psychological terms, is described as 'xenophobia', can be called 'nationalism' in ideological ones. 'Nationalists' believe in the superiority of their nation compared to other nations. But what is a 'nation'? It is a 'sentiment rooted in broad historical, geographical, linguistic, or cultural circumstances. A consciousness of belonging to a tradition which differs from the traditions of other groups'. It is a 'relational term; one nation consists in being what other nations are not'. It is an entity about which 'no 'scientific definition' can be devised'. We observe, then, a theoretical impossibility for one to provide a generally accepted scientific definition of the 'nation', and a pragmatic reality, that billions of people take this concept for granted. They consider themselves as belonging to a nation. They feel that they are different from 'others'. They are proud of their collective and inherited being. Ultimately, they may even be ready to kill or die 'for these inventions'.

Such a belief includes people's readiness to accept invented myths as history; to describe their feelings as patriotism and the same feelings of 'others' as nationalism; to not question why 'we' are always innocent victims and 'others' are always aggressors. This emotion can influence people's understanding of contemporary issues; a great part of Europe's public opinion believes that most non-EU citizens permitted to reside in the European Union in recent years came from predominantly Muslim countries, such as Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. However, official Eurostat data draws a very different picture; most non-EU citizens who received residence permits in the EU during 2014 were from the United States, Ukraine, China and India. The same emotion can influence people's understanding of historical realities. It can make most Greeks believe that Greek and Christian education was forbidden and persecuted during Ottoman times, so that Greek children had to attend a 'secret school'; this

belief is deeply rooted and constantly reproduced by school books and media, despite its repeated refutation by numerous respected historians.

Reporting 'the truth' or what?

It would be interesting if one assessed whether journalists, the professionals whose mission is supposed to be to report 'the truth' to the public, value the duty to tell the truth higher or lower than that to defend 'national interest'. Hillel Nossek argues that 'journalists generally handle any tensions between their journalistic values and the need to meet national ends by having a belief system such as patriotism' argues. Nossek notes that there are exceptions, but holds that 'journalists who lack the "right attitude" earn themselves labels like "irresponsible" and "ideological"'. Prevalent in most Greek and Turkish journalists is the belief that they have a duty to safeguard the 'national interest' and the 'national image', rather than their desire to report accurately in all cases. This is caused by two factors: (1) the fear that they will be labelled as traitors and (2) constant peer pressure.
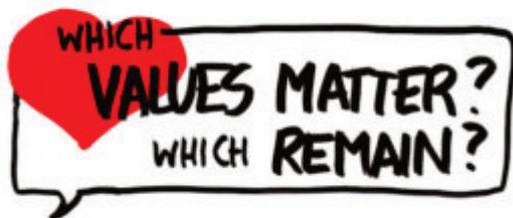
Credit: Anna Lena Schiller/Flickr/CC
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'I overheard a Greek journalist expressing a personal view that deviated from the norm on a "national issue", and yet, the very next day, I read in the newspaper a standard (aligned with the predominant view) article on the matter signed by the very same journalist', said Greek journalist Manolis Kostidis. 'When it comes to Greece, there is a historic preoccupation in the Turkish press. The editors of almost all newspapers,

are rather suspicious', added Mehveş Evin, a Turkish journalist. 'When it comes to a story about Turkey, I don't see much difference between an extreme right wing and a left of centre Greek newspaper', commented Mihalis Vasiliadis, publisher of a Greek minority newspaper in Turkey. 'When I was looking at Greek matters from Turkey, I was writing one-sidedly', were the words of Nur Batur, a Turkish journalist – former Athens correspondent. A statement offering some explanation of the situation was made by Mihalis Vasiliadis, a Turkish born Greek journalist, having worked in both countries: 'I have been sued and taken to a court of justice in two cases; once in Turkey, for allegedly spreading Greek propaganda, and once in Greece, for allegedly spreading Turkish propaganda'.

Are journalists, then, more 'patriotic' rather than 'truthful' only because they are forced to be so? Not really. Nationalism is a feeling implanted in almost everybody, an ideology within many other ideologies. Umut Özkırımlı and Spyros Sofos, co-authors of a joint effort to shed academic light on the two sides of nationalism in Greece and Turkey, honestly admit: 'We found that nothing was as unambiguous as we had originally anticipated. Where one of us would see specific injustices, victims and traumas, the other's perspective would point out alternative ones, silenced and repressed in the other's proposed narrative'. Whether we are journalists, then, academics, or anything else, it seems that we can easily detect signs of nationalism in the words and actions of the 'other' but not in our own ones; however, our own nationalist bias is evident for our colleagues from the 'other' side. This is a challenge worth to be addressed, but requiring a lot more effort than the one made so far.

Andreas Anastasiou is teaching and conducting doctoral research in the department of Media and Communication at the University of Leicester, shifting to the academia after twenty five years in journalism. He holds an MA in Communication Media and Public Relations from the University of Leicester and a BA in Economics from the American College of Greece. He has taught Mass

Communication Theory, Journalism Practice, Comparative Media Studies and Research Methods at the University of Leicester and De Montfort University. His research interests include journalistic professionalism, news selection, comparative media research, 'patriotic' bias and representing the 'other' in the media.

PART III

Women, politics, activism

16

Slutwalk, emotion and protest

Kaitlynn Mendes, University of Leicester

Back in April 2011, while listening to a Canadian rock radio station online, I heard the news about a recent 'SlutWalk' protest in Toronto which was generating much discussion, disagreement and debate, initially in Canada, but eventually across the globe. SlutWalk was a protest in which thousands of women, men and some children, took to the street to challenge the ways victims (particularly women), were routinely blamed and 'slut-shamed' after being sexually assaulted – the idea being that they 'provoked' assault by dressing or acting like 'sluts.' As an expert in the ways feminist movements and activists have been represented in the media (Mendes 2011), I was enraged by the way this movement was being reported on, ridiculed and dismissed, initially by this group of mostly male Toronto DJ's, but consistently by other media commentators, pundits and journalists.

In response, I began to follow and study this grassroots movement as it developed. Just weeks after the first SlutWalk exploded in Toronto, other walks were being organised in other Canadian cities, before moving south to the US, Central and South America, and then across the Atlantic to Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Australasia and Asia. Although there have been a number of other anti-rape movements such as Reclaim the Night, which have been in existence for decades, something about SlutWalk

resonated with tens of thousands of people, many of whom were sexual assault survivors, but many others who were simply sick of the ways women's bodies, actions, clothing and appearance were policed, and used as excuses to shame, blame and abuse them.

Credit: loretta.lime/Flickr/CC BY-SA

Not only did SlutWalk generate news articles, columns, features and letters to the editor, it sparked a flurry of blog posts, particularly in the thriving feminist blogosphere. And what was clear about SlutWalk, is that like other protests which capitalise on anger and outrage (Jasper 1997), SlutWalk was a movement which generated *emotion.* Whether you supported it or opposed it, news articles and blog posts were filled with emotion. For example, a number of commentators noted the ways the movement was naïve, perpetuated rather than challenged the patriarchy, and was generally misguided. Others focused on the ways SlutWalk participants had no clear sense of how the movement challenged the status quo. As one of the movement's fiercest critics, Meghan Murphy parodied: 'We love sex and we're sluts! Take that, patriarchy! We wear lingerie to challenge, um…We're not sure! SLUTS YOU GUYS!'.

On the other hand, numerous survivors or sexual assault shared stories about the importance of SlutWalk, not only for making visible resources for sexual assault prevention and recovery, but for creating a 'safe space to publicly speak out against sexual assault'. Several sex workers used blogs to share:

'[H]ow important SlutWalk is to me – particularly as a sex worker, whose

chances of being assaulted are much higher, with little to no protection from the state because of my legal invisibility. In fact, the only thing the state is likely to do for me is punitive. For me, SlutWalk is so much more than just a protest against sexual assault and victim blaming – it's about reconfiguring cultural attitudes about women's choices about their own bodies, their own sexuality'.

And pissed off members of the public used the movement as a way to reclaim bodily agency and pride:

'I **do have** a sexuality, I **do have** physicality, **I am sexy damnit.** And that is **not** a shameful thing, that is **not** a loss of dignity. It's reclaiming ownership of what is rightly mine from the start – and making a stand to assert that **no one has the right to abuse, insult, malign, harm, or attack anyone AT ALL, including me, for making our own damn bodily choices**. Even if they are the slut-version of Voldemort. Even if they are "cheap STD-infected hookers'. Even if they're not sexy. Even if they *are* sexy.

As part of my research I also interviewed 22 organisers of SlutWalks around the world, all of whom were clearly touched, and many of whom were left emotionally drained from their involvement with the movement. All of this points to the affective labour involved in activism, which is often understudied. As Umeshree Govender, organiser of SlutWalk Cape Town pointed out, her involvement included a mixture of 'euphoria' and 'heartbreak.' She was euphoric about being able to bring together over 2,000 people in solidarity for a cause, but heartbroken to hear so many stories from survivors and their efforts to convince others they were not to blame for their assault. SlutWalk Chicago organiser Stephanie Sutton on the other hand saw her involvement in the movement as a crucial way of healing after her own assault. As she stated, being involved with SlutWalk 'felt like it was the only way I could take power over that situation [the assault] and seek any form of justice, and I know there are others who definitely feel that way.'

Regardless of how many cities SlutWalk spread to, or how many

thousands attended, from a feminist perspective, it's clear from the thousands of testimonies, Tweets, articles and blogs that the movement acted as a form of healing, solidarity, and even empowerment for many. And while this individual level of healing is certainly important, SlutWalk did more than that – it managed to introduce a range of feminist rhetoric and discourses into the mainstream. Concepts such as rape culture, victim-blaming, and slut-shaming are all on the public's agenda, and are being vociferously debated and discussed amongst students, scholars, academics, pundits, politicians and policy makers. For its ability to raise consciousness on these issues, and bring rape and sexual assault back onto the public's agenda, like it or loathe it, the movement, in my view can only be viewed as a great success.

Dr. Kaitlynn Mendes is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Media and Communication at the University of Leicester. Kaitlynn is an expert on feminism, activism and gender issues in the media, and has published in journals such as Feminist Media Studies; Media, Culture and Society; The International Journal of Cultural Studies, and the Journal of Gender Studies. Kaitlynn is also the author/editor of four books, Feminism in the News: Representations of the Women's Movement Since the 1960s (Palgrave, 2011); Feminist Erasures: Challenging Backlash Culture (edited with Kumarini Silva, Palgrave, 2015), The Routledge Major Works Collection: Gender and Media (Routledge, forthcoming 2016), and SlutWalk: Feminism, Activism and Media (Palgrave, 2015), which was recently selected as Book of the Week for the Times Higher Education magazine. In addition to her academic research, Kaitlynn has appeared on programmes such as the BBC's Woman's Hour, numerous BBC Radio Leicester shows, and regularly writes op-eds for publications such as The Conversation and The Leicester Mercury.

17

A lesson in self-immolation

Mariya Ivancheva, University College Dublin

Christina Grozeva and Peter Valchanov's The Lesson (2014) is probably the first feature film that explains the Bulgarian winter of discontent in 2013. It tells the story of a 'normal' week in the life Nadezhda (Margarita Gosheva), a Bulgarian school teacher from a small town. While she tries to punish one of her students who committed theft in a morally instructive way, life teaches the instructor a much more serious moral lesson. The Lesson is based on a true story from 2010, sensationally publicized in the Bulgarian media as 'A teacher robbed a bank with a toy gun'. This title attracted the attention of the two directors. The film is interesting not only because of its unusual and curious story, but precisely because it is told through the many painful truths in the everyday life of an 'ordinary' Bulgarian.

Credit: Film Movement

At the first glance, the movie is fun. Viewers laugh heartily at the teacher's masterfully portrayed clumsiness, at the infantile comments and reactions of the adult characters in the movie, at the moments when human strength, weakness, and ingenuity backfire or lubricate stalled mechanisms of everyday life. Yet, the smiles gradually freeze and so does the heart. With a stunning simplicity, typical of directors such as Michael Haneke, Grozeva and Valchanov lead Nadezhda through all the cycles of a modern hell. Unemployment and precarity, uncertainty and exploitation, physical threats and sexual coercion all feature in Nadezhda's story as she tries to pay back the last installments of her family's mortgage.

The Lesson reveals a long-held public secret: most of the physical and emotional labor in the world today falls on the backs of women. Beyond the work women perform in their workplace, they are the ones who not only take care of the family's survival and well-being, but also predominantly manage the household economy and debt. The film also reveals the difficulties and the conflicts which women face in an advanced capitalist society: the need to confront not only gender inequalities but also the crumbling of all networks of institutional and interpersonal solidarity and support. The story of the Bulgarian teacher shows what happens when all forms of human dignity and mutual aid are allotted monetary value and expected to perform according to market rules. It reminds us that despite the promise of 1989 the post-socialist world was not liberated from relentless bureaucracy – that it lives on and lives well, ever more soulless and impersonal, especially in these times of new technologies. *The Lesson* does not shy away from the painful topic of corruption: the normalized impunity of informal cooperation between the agents of law enforcement, financial capital and the criminal world. Without becoming sensationalist, the film shows the subtle yet brutal mechanisms of physical, sexual, and emotional coercion in a financially and emotionally impoverished society.

Nadezhda is a woman in a man's world. Judging by the characters in the film, Bulgarian men (or men in general) can easily afford to act ruthlessly, irresponsibly and with impunity toward all women around them. Women are bullied, lied to, or left in oblivion. The audience is

stunned by the respectable yet inexplicable pride with which the teacher suffers humiliation from the male characters in the movie. The only somewhat different male role is taken by Nadezhda's unemployed husband (Ivan Barnev). Despite his apparent naivety, however, he secretly takes out a mortgage and only confesses this to her once it is too late. Yet, despite his wrongdoing, Nadezhda fears hurting or humiliating him.

It is here that the events of the winter of 2013 appear as a negative background to the movie. In late January that year Bulgaria witnessed seven self-immolations (since then the number has increased to over twenty). With one exception – a single mother – all who have committed self-immolation were men. As in the case of Mohamed Bouazizi – the man whose self-immolation ignited the fire of the Arab Spring – these Bulgarian "living torches" are often failed breadwinners in families exposed to prolonged poverty, unemployment, and insecurity. They often commit suicide after failing to pay off their seemingly insignificant household debts. For a Bulgarian household, however, these few hundreds or few thousands of Euro debt are simply not insignificant. Still less, as the film reminds us, when the stake of the loan is not just monetary: paying off the debt becomes an issue of life and death. These debtors are betwixt and between the impersonal power of the bank and the rising institution of 'private lenders': thugs who will stop at nothing to collect the loan with its huge interest. These 'lenders' are now a growing part of the daily scenery of the Bulgarian economic and social life. One can take a walk down the streets of any town to see mushrooming pawnshops, outnumbered only by casinos, bingo halls, and bookmakers' clubs. Named after Western cities or tropical destinations, they prowl about, offering risky ways to deal with the growing household debt, until a straw breaks the camel's back, sometimes, literally.

What the film fails to offer is even a hint to the causes and conditions: why is it that a Bulgarian teacher decided to rob a bank in 2010? While the movie lacks historical references, the genealogy of the Bulgarian *The Lesson* is painfully clear. The introduction of market economy after 1989 deepened the growing poverty and inequality already present in the later years of state socialism. The closure of peasant cooperatives and

factories after mass privatization in the 1990s concentrated the political and economic power in the hands of the banking, commercial and political elite. It immersed a growing number of Bulgarian families in a never-ending crisis, unemployment, and uncertainty. The global financial crisis of 2008, portrayed as alien to our "stable economy", was used as a justification for continuing austerity, shrinking revenues and rises in prices. As Romanian anthropologist Florin Poenaru recently wrote, the message of post-socialist governments was: 'The poor must die!'

Although global protest movements raged in the streets expressing indignation that ordinary people were paying the bill of the banking crisis, in Bulgaria even timid criticisms of capitalism as a system were met with resentment; as heretic attempts to restrict the holy freedom of the market.Illogical alliances and antagonisms emerged. 'Civil' dissatisfaction with corrupt politics was opposed to 'social' discontent with rising misery: The 'hard-working middle classes' (main protagonists of the July protests) did not see allies in those who protested the electricity price hikes the preceding February. The destruction of the welfare state was presented as a sign of improvement. Privatization and austerity were seen as remedies to unemployment and impoverishment, while the latter were attributed to personal laziness and lack of entrepreneurial spirit. Equality and social justice are presented as incompatible with freedom and contrary to the 'morality' of the market.

The self-immolations as well as the true story of *The Lesson* show that Bulgarians are now 'proud' beneficiaries of one of the main features of advanced capitalist societies, that is, anomie: the lack of rights and clear norms and rules of social integration, collective justice, and solidarity. Citizens' participation in today's society happens almost exclusively through consumption. In the situation of chronic poverty, precarious income fails to meet the rising price of consumption and – as a logical consequence – of household debt. Informal loans provide a quick-fix and unsustainable solution. They gradually become an unbearable, dangerous burden, as households sink deeper into the quagmire of debt.

For some the outcome is suicide (and even the spectacular form of self

immolation). This is historically and statistically truer for men. They turn to forms of self-aggression especially in situations that deprive them of their symbolic masculinity: the persistent norm that men should be strong and act as breadwinners, even today, when the largest part of productive, and reproductive work is done by women. The gender pay-gap and traditionally lower pay of feminised forms of work (such as teaching) as well as formal and informal care work which women do still happen in conditions of growing gender inequality. Thus, no surprises when women resort to highly stigmatized and dangerous solutions as sex work, or – less often – as bank robbery. The reasons to seek such solutions – the economic deadlock and coercion of women (and people in general) in the former Eastern bloc – are hardly mentioned and even less addressed in policy reports both in Bulgaria and abroad. Campaigns against domestic violence shy away from mentioning the economic and social reasons that draw Bulgarian men to violence, and women – to migration, often along dangerous paths.

I watched *The Lesson* with a friend who was attending a creative writing course. He was delighted: "The directors follow the basic rule we are taught in class: if you want to tell a credible story, be a sadist to your characters! Torture them, don't stop, don't let them take a breath…" His words stayed with me. Perhaps that is why people still withstand capitalism – its story is credible. And so is that of *The Lesson*.

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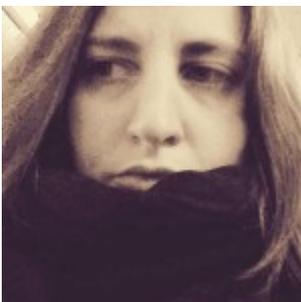
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Fuck the patriarchy

Heather Savigny, Bournemouth University

I guess we could just say, fuck the patriarchy, and that would be the end of the post; it's a simple expression of protest. But then I may need to provide a few more words…

Femen, Everyday Sexism and Slutwalk are just three examples of movements that in their own ways send very clear messages of resistance; rejection; and strength. And yet, despite years of feminist/women's advancement, we still have those who deny the existence or the opportunities afforded by feminism.

Without feminists, in the UK, women would have no right to vote; thanks to the women who were forcibly fed nearly 100 years ago. Without women's activism rape in marriage would still be legal (and it was in the UK until 1991). Women's activism has led to campaigns to eradicate unwanted sexual behaviour on public transport (Project Guardian) and the abolition of the TamponTax. Without women's activism we would not have an Equal Pay Act, or indeed many of the rights that women in the West now take for granted (or have been 'granted').

So when we hear women assert 'I am not a feminist' or 'I am not one

of those shouty feminists' it does give us pause to think: Really? Because it was by feminism, it was by activism, it was by shouting, that women were able to effect the changes that have loosened some of the shackles on women's lives.

Of course, the history of feminist thought has not been without its own problems. Perhaps most significantly the assumption of second wave feminists that all women's experiences were the same as the white middle class writers who articulated it. (For a beautiful articulation of this see bell hooks). At the same time, the existence of tensions and debates within feminism does not negate its utility or purpose, rather it enables us to see myriad ways in which the patriarchy is manifest. The problems that feminism has had to work out demonstrate that, rather than being some idealised abstract project, feminism is about real people reacting to the individual social, political, cultural and economic contexts in which they find themselves. The tensions within aspects of feminism actually legitimise it as a collective of egalitarian projects belonging to the multifarious men and women, around the world and throughout history, who seek to question and challenge the shifting guises and/or manifestations of patriarchy. As patriarchy has evolved and mutated into new forms, so must our response. Now we must say: fuck patriarchy.

The existence of contemporary feminist literature and movements, also remind us that there is still work to do. And this work is taking place within the academy, and beyond. Within the academy we are encouraged to present our arguments as nuanced and subtle; this is also the case in public discourse. Healy argues that nuance also 'obstructs the development of theory that in intellectually interesting, empirically generative, or practically successful'. In short, nuance works to shore up and diffuse, rather than challenge or destabilise the status quo. Feminism in many of its forms encourages us to challenge, or at least, question dominant norms.

So if we do say, fuck the patriarchy, what is it that we express? Fuck is a word that is seen as offensive and upsetting. Yet isn't the patriarchy upsetting and offensive? Where Female Genital Mutilation is still taking place, affecting an estimated 137,000 women in the UK (and these are

the figures that are known about, and do not include those that are 'hidden'); where rape is a weapon of war; where women are subject to daily humiliations and sexual violations because of their biological appearance (as documented by Laura Bates).That is pretty offensive; presumably more so than just a word.

So the expression fuck the patriarchy can be used to transgress, to oppose and to draw attention; and to express anger, as a way to mobilise. And so we can also use the phrase as a call to arms and rejection of the status quo, the systems of hierarchy and authority which bind, take up energy that may be better spent elsewhere; articulating the 'here and now'. Collective action and articulation is powerful; it facilitates the reclamation of agency in the face of oppression. I know too many women in professional roles who are exhausted by the obstacles, placed daily, in their way through the patriarchal structures in which they find themselves. Recognising there are other women out there who share this discontent, this rage, means this 'fuck it' attitude can be empowering in its own right; as has been demonstrated by the numerous women who have gone before us, willing to stand up and be counted and say: fuck the patriarchy.

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The role of female blogging in democracy: A netnographic study of Nigerian blogs

Diretnan Dusu Bot, University of Leicester

Recent global statistics reveal the rapid growth of female blogs in Nigeria. It is only on the blogging platform that female presence surpasses that of men. There is a huge readership of blogs by Nigerian women too. For instance, Linda Ikeji's Blog alone has over 150,000 visitors daily. The study of female blogging and its impact on democracy is developed on the idea that the unrestricted nature of the internet might hold the potential to allow women's voices to be heard, thereby improving their democratic participation which is lacking. The use of blogs by women for mobilization/activism to affect government policy has also been witnessed in recent times in Nigeria. The 'Bring Back Our Girls' campaign of 2014 and the 'Child Marriage' debate of 2013 are critical examples. Being campaigns of online origin, (particularly from blogs and Twitter) they add credence to the discourse on the correlation between internet discourse and offline democratic practice (having led to policy reformation).

Credit: #BringBackOurGirls Photo Gallery

I therefore explore how Nigerian women have embraced the practice of blogging and how blogs can serve as a platform for promoting women's equality and empowerment. Blogs are said to provide a platform for African women to become active creators and disseminators of knowledge by writing about what is important to them. I investigate the extent to which these discussions qualify as a form of active 'participatory politics' where discussions held about gender-based inequalities and discrimination involve proposing solutions, organising actions to address such issues, or dialoguing with policy-makers (or their PR representatives) and media practitioners (e.g. popular bloggers and online journalists). The lack of available literature on the female use of the online platform to make their voices heard in the Nigerian democracy is also the critical aim of my research. There is no statistical record of female writing in the online space or blogging to advocate causes that affect them in governance. The desire of my study is to bridge this gap, while providing information on blog readers – a population which has been neglected by previous global researchers who dwell mainly on the activities of blog authors.

I argue that female bloggers in Africa, who may not necessarily be 'feminists' by western definition (because of cultural factors and the negative connotation of the term 'feminist' in Africa) can be said to exemplify the 'networked counter-publics' of Jessalynn Keller based on the definitions of third-wave feminism where 'activism' has been re-defined to reflect the creation of a 'public self', rather than an outcome/action-oriented activity. Hence, cultural and political activities have been

transformed and may be unrecognizable if interpreted through a more traditional understanding of the term, 'activism'. Harris associates this change with the "neoliberal cultural climate brought about by individualization, globalization, consumer citizenship and a collapse of class-based classifications and traditional forms of protest politics" (p. 430). Similarly, I argue that the online experience of Nigerian women is multi-dimensional; they may not appeal to a specific sub-culture nor identify with a specific protest group. In most cases, they may not even position themselves around the dominant culture in an obviously activist way. Hence, they complicate the definition of the 'political'.

Specifically, I examine the conversations of 30 female blogs on the rejection of the recent 'Gender and Equality Bill' by the Nigerian Senate. The bill seeks to tackle issues such as gender discrimination in political and public life as well as prohibit violence against women. It also seeks to establish women's freedom of movement, female economic activity and girls' access to education. The major argument of the senate members who voted against the bill was hinged on traditional and religious factors, with senate members seen quoting the Bible and Sharia law to vote against the bill. The rejection of the bill also stimulated a wide range of internet discourse by women who were outraged and used diverse online platforms to protest. Popular blogs authored by women were at the forefront of publishing posts and articles to put pressure on the government to revisit the bill. This pressure seemed to draw the attention of the senate president who released a statement urging citizens to be calm as he promised to revisit and possibly encourage the adoption of certain aspects of the bill. Policy-makers such as Fani Femi Kayode and Oby Ekwesili notably congratulated social media and reputable female blogs like Linda Ikeji and Bella Naija for putting pressure on the government to act.

Being at the early stages of the analysis, I intend to use 'Netnography' as a new 'live' method of online investigation that helps elicit data from prolonged discourse participation and observation. This is relevant because, as Kozinets and colleagues (2013) point out, interpretations of online communications and communities emerge gradually, to develop cultural codes that allow a better understanding and interpretation of

virtual spaces. Hence, by immersing oneself in discourse, pertinent behavioral patterns, or modes of mobilization or activism can unfold through extensive observation or interaction. The information retrieved is further analyzed by coding themes relevant to this research. To cope with the Netnographic limitation of studying one online 'platform' in isolation (which can yield incomplete insight), discourses that are relevant to answering research questions will be trailed across multiple forums if need be.

Diretnan Dusu Bot is a first year Ph.D. student at the University of Leicester, UK. Her research focuses on how Nigerian women have embraced the practice of blogging and how blogs can serve as a platform for promoting women's equality and empowerment. Her research explores to what extent blog discussions qualify as a form of active 'participatory politics' where discussions held about gender-based inequalities and discrimination involve proposing solutions, organising action to address such issues, or dialoguing with policy-makers (or their PR representatives)/media practitioners (popular bloggers, or online journalists). Her twitter handle is @DiretM.

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Exploring Instagram activism: Emma Watson and sustainable fashion

Miruna Virtopeanu, Independent Researcher

Instagram has become one of the fastest growing online social networks in the world, with an estimated 400 million active monthly users (Instagram, February 2016). This has sparked the interest of social media researchers who have focused almost exclusively on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube in the so-called 'Web 2.0' era.

Whilst earlier studies have focused more on understanding this platform and its users, (see Hu et al. (2014) or Ferrara et al. (2014) for example) more recent research has been concerned with aspects such as how DIY celebrification can be achieved via Instagram (Maghfiroh and Hapsari, 2015) or how feminist self-imaging practices are being constructed on this platform (Olszanowski, 2014). These are just a few of the issues that have been recently tackled by researchers interested in studying Instagram, and there's still a lot of room for further research concerning this social media platform.

One area worth exploring is social media activism, as according to Juanita

Crider (2015) "Whether it is Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, or Periscope, most 21st century activists will tell you that social media is integral to their work". Hence this blogpost looks at Instagram's potential for becoming a place for online activism, or more precisely how it can be used for connective action, thus proposing a topic for further research to explore in more depth.

Applying the logic of connective action to Instagram

Whilst previous research related to connective action, such as Vromen et al. (2015)'s study of young people's use of social media for political engagement, have focused more on Facebook and Twitter, thus far there has been very little consideration of how Instagram might facilitate new forms of connective action.

According to Bennett and Segerberg (2012: p.750) "connective action networks are typically far more individualized and technologically organized sets of processes that result in action without the requirement of collective identity framing or the levels of organizational resources required to respond effectively to opportunities" that also have at the core of their logic "the recognition of digital media as organizing agents" (ibid : p.752). Therefore, a connective action can be created around a personal frame that resonates with individuals who have no previous affiliation or connection to the actor from which it originated.

Thus, a social media platform such as Instagram, or more precisely an individual Instagram account, could become the basis for a connective action, which can be propagated via network features such as hashtags, or the social interactions taking place on that particular Instagram account. One such example is actress Emma Watson's use of Instagram to promote sustainable fashion.

Emma Watson and Instagram Activism

An internationally recognised advocate of the HeforShe feminist movement, Watson is known for addressing all sorts of issues and movements on her social media profiles. For example, in January 2016,

she started a feminist book club using her Twitter account. She has also used her Instagram account to raise awareness about sustainable fashion, leveraging her celebrity status to shine some light on 'designers that are considering local craft and production, artisan skills, the environment, sustainability and the longevity of fashion'.

Figure 1: Screenshot of one of Emma
Watson's Instagram post from her
personal account

Whilst these messages actually originated from a post by Sarah Slutsky, her stylist, their re-posting brought them to the attention of Watson's 6.6 million followers on Instagram. A quick glance at her account shows that the majority of her recent posts (as of February 2016) feature the actress posing in outfits from her press tours, all of which are produced by ethical designers such as Ralph Lauren or Paul Andrew, which she then promotes via the description of the posts by tagging them.
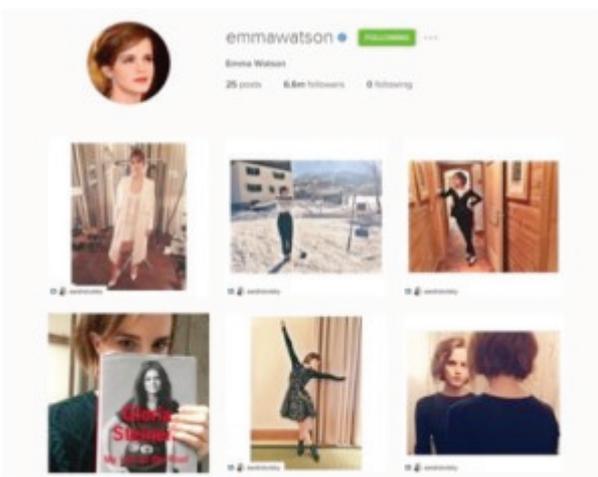

Figure 2: Screenshot of Emma Watson's
personal Instagram account

Thus, Instagram becomes a platform for Watson to express her support for the sustainable fashion movement, that recently came to prominence in the documentary *The True Cost* (Morgan, 2015) which the actress also promoted on Instagram. Whilst her status as a celebrity could be seen as the main cause for her large following on Instagram, it is the social media network itself which gives the actress the means to quickly disseminate this message of support and encouragement for more people to consider sustainable fashion and engage with it. Furthermore, unlike Twitter, which restricts its users to only 140 characters per tweet, Instagram has the ability to offer lengthy descriptions for the images posted. In this way, it is arguably more suited towards the promotion of the sustainable fashion movement than other text-based social media sites such as Twitter.

Moreover, whilst initially the messages and images posted by Watson on her personal account are primarily shared with her followers, they inevitably end up being re-distributed by both citizens and professional journalists on other social media platforms. Her celebrity status also leads to these posts featuring in traditional media such as newspapers and magazines. For example, Vanity Fair and Vogue, two of the most important publications for the fashion industry, have used Watson's Instagram posts in their coverage of the sustainable fashion movement.

Whilst it's true that Watson's status as a celebrity is a factor that needs to be taken into consideration, the fact that she used Instagram as a platform to share her message with others highlights its potential as a platform for promoting connective activism. However, more research is needed in order to analyse the responses to this movement on Instagram, as well as how it is used to raise awareness about other political campaigns. How are Watson's followers engaging with these messages? Do they take them into account, or simply follow and like her Instagram posts because they're fans? Could an individual who does not benefit from a celebrity status have the same success in disseminating messages and gathering support for an activist cause? Such questions can only be answered through further empirical research into Instagram's potential as a tool of social activism.

Miruna Virtopeanu graduated from the University of Leicester with a First Class (Honours) degree in BSc Communication, Media and Society in July 2015. Her research focuses on the intersections between celebrity culture, fan studies and social media activism. Her dissertation project, entitled 'Fangs, Fans and Facebook' explored the ways in which Facebook was used by fans to engage with the producers of the American TV series The Vampire Diaries. Miruna has extensive experience of social media research, working as a Research Assistant on the University of Leicester Teaching Enhancement Fund project 'Screencasts and Media Studies' and the British Academy funded 'YouTube, Sousveillance and the Policing of the Union Flag Protests in Northern Ireland.'

Digital media and the politics of protest

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Everyday online conversation, emotion and political action

Daniel Jackson, Bournemouth University, Scott Wright, University of Melbourne and Todd Graham, University of Groningen

Creating public spaces that foster political talk amongst citizens is challenging business. Tell people that it's a 'political' space and (however well designed) you will invariably find it is used by political junkies, and is largely ignored by those who don't self–identify as 'political'. Consequently, many commentators will observe said disengagement by the majority of citizens, and complain of political apathy.

But what if we are looking for the wrong things, and in the wrong places? In our recent work, we have been arguing that a) we need to move beyond the now well studied formally 'political' spaces, and see what is going on in everyday lifestyle communities, and b) we need to reconceive political talk as less narrow, less normative and rational, and instead embrace the vernacular, expressive and porous characteristics of everyday public speech.

And of course, emotions are an important link to both of these issues. If we accept the public sphere is becoming more emotionalised, then we can

begin to conceive the nature of political engagement itself, as well as the spaces in which we look for it.

In this spirit, for about the last four years, we have been examining political talk in non-political online forums: how it emerges, what happens when it does emerge, and what we can learn about issues of technology, community, political engagement and citizenship. We set our focus outside of political flashpoints such as elections, protests or social movements, and instead root our analysis in the everyday. Our empirical focus has been on three popular, general interest UK-based forums: www.netmums.com, www.digitalspy.com and www.moneysavingexpert.com. These websites cover salient aspects of contemporary culture: consumption, media and family. But first and foremost they are spaces embedded in everyday life where people come to share personal experiences and dilemmas, discuss their interests, meet likeminded people, and have fun.

At this point we would like to share with you a minor revelation that our study revealed. Across the three forums, over 50% of all discussions that were political at some point led to political action. Further details about the design of the study, what types of political actions we found, and who they were directed at can be found in our journal articles. In the remainder of this article, we want to reflect on some of the fundamental questions our study provoked: *what is it about these spaces that seemed to foster political action*, and secondly, *why was one of the forums (DigitalSpy) the exception*, with little political action emerging from everyday talk?

In our article in *Information, Communication and Society*, we develop this argument further, but here we offer three ruminations on how the characteristics of the online platform/ community shape political talk and mobilisation, with particular focus on the role of emotion therein.

1.*The connection to everyday life and the personal/ emotional nature of talk;*

Part of the value of examining third spaces lies in their everyday nature as a crucible of negotiation between the public and private, the political and

personal. Here, we found MoneySavingExpert (MSE) and Netmums to be productive spaces for turning personal problems into political action. When political talk arose in these spaces, it very often was deeply connected to participants' personal lives. Consequently, emotion is welcomed, and talk was frequently emotional in tone. We found that emotion can facilitate connections between people that lead to all kinds of actions – in both private lives and public.

In MSE and Netmums, people also felt connected because their subject matter was the self, not politics, therefore removing or side-stepping one of the barriers to engagement for many contemporary citizens. In contrast, for DigitalSpy (DS) the entry point for conversations was what is in the news or on TV, hence there was immediately a greater distance between participants and the subject matter. This mattered when politics emerged because in DS it was framed as something to talk about but too distant to influence, whereas in MSE and Netmums it was framed as something that was close to home, affecting forum members, and something they could mobilize around.

Take this example of a Netmums thread, where participants shared experiences of Job Centre staff. It was prompted by one person who was treated particularly poorly by a member of staff, and felt so 'upset' that she felt the need to share it with others. Read through the thread and you will see emotion running through it, often through the use of emoticons. You will also see how other forum participants begin to mobilize around the sharing of stories, which are then presented to those in power.

Poster 1: I have also had really bad experiences with the Job Centre and found going there no point at all. It didn't help me to find work at all, it was just a big waste of time. I ended up crying at one appointment as they made me feel that bad … I feel so strongly about this I wish that I knew how to voice my opinions

Poster 2: I'm thinking of setting up a website/facebook page so that people can voice their opinions and relate their experience of the staff at Job Centres.

Poster 3: OK…I'll do it!

I hope you will all come on and tell these same stories when it's set up? I intend to contact MPs etc. with details of them to prove how poorly the JCs are performing.

2. **A culture (and structure) of help and support**

Both MSE and Netmums are communities organized around *self-help*, where the emphasis is on goal-oriented discussions to help members with their particular dilemmas. When you look at the culture of the forums, people are there to listen, to help or to tell their stories and receive support from others. Contrastingly, in DigitalSpy – and most other political forums we would argue – people are there mainly to *discuss*. MSE and Netmums participants were there, for the most part, with the intention of taking action, namely personal actions in their everyday lives – to save money, be a better parent and so on. This action orientated mind-set, along with the everyday and personal nature of the forums, we argue, helped facilitate political action.

This mind-set comes from the top. Both Netmums and MSE make clear that they have a civic role, amongst their other functions. The purpose of DigitalSpy is far less goal-oriented. It is about 'news and conversation about entertainment, technology and the media': in essence, a talking shop.

In the sociological literature, the political mobilization that emerges from self-help groups has typically been positioned within the broader shift towards lifestyle and identity politics. Hence, they can be framed as contributing towards a retreat from civic life as people focus increasingly on their own narrow concerns; or alternatively as an empowering democratic force, through providing spaces for reflection on the reality of current politics, with an emphasis on questions of identity, experience and storytelling rather than the broad redistributive questions that had concerned previous generations. An interesting empirical observation from our study is how the forums performed both roles, with many

discussions leading to *personal actions* that were not for societal benefit, alongside the finding that the forums facilitated all sorts of manifest and latent forms of political participation in aid of the common good, with many of these actions emerging as a result of the personal actions. Thus we would argue that an increase in personal empowerment that comes through self-help can have civic repercussions, such as heightening awareness of the broader social forces that impinge on people as individuals, increasing social capital and encouraging forms of political participation.

3. The interactive and reciprocal nature of the platforms and communities;

The third factor was the interactive and reciprocal nature of both the platform and communities. Much has been said about the interactive and networking affordances of (new) social media such as Twitter and Facebook. However, unlike many new social media, discussion forums seem to be conducive to reciprocity: discursive reciprocal exchange. They allow people the time to read and reply to each other's posts. The threading of discussions (and public access) also makes it easy for participants to follow discussions and interact with one another. These affordances along with the personal connection and culture of support seemed to foster meaningful reciprocal and reflexive exchanges, allowing relationships, and a sense of community, to develop and prosper. Indeed, in Netmums and MSE, participants often shared very personal details, experiences and stories with one another. These intimate and personal-based communicative practices seemed to be conducive to affective subject-position taking. That is, these online communities opened up spaces of personal and emotional relationships through which participants forged affective bonds that allowed for deeper levels of understanding, thus fostering a sense of belonging. Such connections, we argue, made participants more receptive to taking political actions or mobilizing around them.

What we are essentially arguing here, is that there is a relationship between technological affordances, emotionality, self-help and political

action (not excluding the other ingredients we have discussed here and in our other work). As other contributions to this volume document, emotion can play a very positive role in facilitating political action, but as this and our previous studies have documented, you need the right kind of platform or culture where emotion is welcomed. And here, it might just be that spaces rooted in the everyday, rather than the 'political', are more productive than we might have imagined.

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Social media in the Bahrain Uprising: From hope to despair

Marc Owen Jones, University of Tübingen

Casting one's' eyes back to 2011, there was certainly a lot of hope vested in the potential of social media. From Egypt to Tunisia, protesters held aloft banners bearing the logos of Facebook and Twitter. In Bahrain, the widespread sense of hope among thousands of Bahrainis was evident in their use of social media. Many people, grinning as only people do when a future of unlimited possibility stretches before them, used their smartphones to document their attendance at the Pearl Roundabout, Bahrain's 'Freedom Square'. They then shared it on Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, and other social media platforms.

Credit: Bahrain Center for Human Rights

Twitter and Facebook in particularly held an almost redemptive promise; Could this networked sense of triumph somehow galvanize a whole population into mobilization, while raising the costs for the state of engaging in repression? YouTube videos also allowed the refrains of the revolution to become ingrained in people's minds. Chants such as as 'silmiyya, silmiyya' (peaceful peaceful), 'yasqut Hamad' (down with Hamad) 'ashsha'b yurīd islāh/isqāt annizām' (the people want the reform/fall of the regime), 'birūh, bidem, nafīdak yalBahrain' (with our blood, our soul, we sacrifice ourselves for you, Bahrain) grew to be iconic of the uprising. This is especially true of the refrain of yasqut Hamad, which was soon translated into a series of beeps or pips that were frequently honked on car or air horns. The sounds of these pips were often written in an onomatopoeic fashion as '1010 1010 or 'tin tin tityn.' Other, more ambitious activists even made and distributed on YouTube a film featuring an air horn as the protagonist. The film dramatized the arrest, torture and death of a Bahraini citizen, with the air horn and its indefatigable ejaculation of the tin tin tityn refrain representing the notion of 'Sumood' (or steadfastness).

In addition to this, other acts of peaceful, creative defiance were circulated on social media. These included balloon releases, in which V for victory signs, pictures of martyrs, or slogans like 'Down with Hamad' were attached to balloons and then released into the Bahraini sky. Such seemingly harmless acts were taken seriously by the authorities, often to comic effect. In one instance, a balloon displaying the phrase 'Down with Hamad' was filmed being released. Later, another video emerged that showed policemen attempting to capture the balloon. Eventually the police succeeded, and put the fully inflated balloon in the back of a police jeep. Satirically, those who filmed the video titled it Itiqal Nafaakha Yasqut Hamad (Arrest of Yasqut Hamad Balloon). Similarly, a wooden mannequin of a woman with a sign reading 'free our prisoners' was arrested and put in the car.

Statutes of the Pearl Roundabout, which itself had become symbolic and metonymic of the uprising itself, were often made by activists following its vindictive destruction by the security services. These creative forms

of resistance, mediated by social media, allowed optimism and defiance to be shared with those who may have not witnessed the original act. Furthermore, by allowing activists and citizens to publicize the subversive, social media assisted in deinstitutionalising political discourse and disrupting the agenda setting nature of the state media.

Yet in their defiance, many at the time did not realise they were making themselves targets for the Al Khalifa dominated government, who were digging in, stalling on reform, and using coercion to arrest, intimidate, torture and kill many of the country's political opposition. In a country where even shows of disloyalty to the ruling regime can land you in prison, photographs on social media of someone at a protest march, or at the Pearl Roundabout, were tantamount to a confession of treason. A platform that had held so much promise, was quickly becoming a sinister tool for the state's accumulation of evidence against anyone displaying remotely critical tendencies.

Soon, Twitter vigilantes were harvesting publically available information and accusing people of treason. Joy and optimism, mediated on social media, was being mined. Accounts like @7areghum (Arabic for 'the one that burns them') would tweet out photos of so-called 'traitors', demanding their names and addresses. In Bahrain, a tiny island community, it did not take long before government loyalists, or perhaps members of the security forces, replied with the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the 'traitors.' Some, after having their picture or name tweeted by such accounts, fled the country. Others packed up their things, and slept by the door, for they did not want the rest of their family to witness what they felt was their inevitable arrest in the middle of the night.

Before long, malicious social media accounts would be spitting out sectarian rhetoric, attempting to exacerbate Sunni/Shi'a cleavages in Bahrain in order to abet a divide and rule policy a historic tactic in the country. The relative unity that had been evident early in the uprising, began to erode. The state's destruction of Shia religious structure, and invocations of Iranian involvement, all contributed to driving a wedge

between members of the opposition. Yet despair had not completely sunk in. Even in March 2011, there were attempts to recoup this unity on social media. One man spawned the Twitter hashtag #UniteBH (Unite Bahrain) in order to salvage a sense of commonality. The premise was simple, tweet about something that united all Bahrainis, regardless of sect or political reason. The regime's response to what became a viral show of the potential power of social media was crude, they arrested its creator. Even those with badges saying 'No Shia No Sunni Just Bahraini', a slogan that characterised the #UniteBH campaign, were harassed at checkpoints.

The Al Khalifa regime's commitment to protecting their position of privilege rendered any benefits of the accountability and transparency allowed by social media to be largely ignored. Occasionally, the Ministry of the Interior said they would investigate egregious acts by the police caught on video, but not much ever came of this. It was mostly done to appease international allies. This wilful blindness to police abuse documented and shared on social media was demonstrated when the MOI said they responded to a video of a policeman throwing a Molotov cocktail, 2 years after it had already been circulated. Vindictive and efficient in using it as a tool of surveillance, the government were lackadaisical in using it is a tool of accountability.

Helping out the government were international companies, including the likes of Gamma International, who were selling products to the Bahrain government that could infect a user's smartphone or computer, and view valuable information that could hijack your microphone, log your keystrokes and even view you on your device's camera. Often the delivery method for such malware was links distributed across social media or email. Those arrested even reported that during interrogation, the police demanded passwords for their social media accounts.

With one of the highest internet penetration and social media take up rates in the Middle East, social media had a special resonance in Bahrain. Yet the fusion of technological determinism and social constructivism was highlighted by the tug of war over the implementation of the new technologies. With certain forces using it as a tool of social change,

others were harnessing it as a weapon of the status quo. The resultant? A disequilibrium particularistic to Bahrain itself, yet one that ultimately strayed from the initial hope, optimism, and joy of 2011.

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# Amplified messages: How hashtag activism and Twitter diplomacy converged at #ThisIsACoup – and won

Wasim Ahmed, University of Sheffield

#ThisisACoup, born in Barcelona as a part of a collective campaign started by members of the public in protest of the stringent Greek bailout demands, drew tweets from the mainstream media, Nobel Prize winners, and current Prime Ministers, and attracted over 1.1 billion views globally in July 2015.

There are some that say hashtag activism is not intended to have any effect on the real world, nevertheless, #ThisIsACoup demonstrates the power of social media for signifying solidarity, raising awareness, and rapidly spreading information across the globe.

Social media scholars have conducted vast amounts of research across the broad spectrum of online activism. For example, research has considered whether new social media can have any real effect on contentious politics; other research has examined the links between social media and

public space. Research has also suggested that social media may have played a central role in shaping Arab uprisings. Thus, developing a better understanding of online activism, in all its forms, is of relevance to social media scholars as it can help us to understand how users can engage with social media platforms.
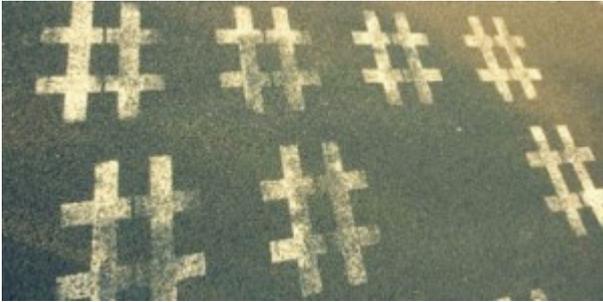
Credit: Michael Coghlan/Lots of Hash/CC BY-SA

Online Activism

Twitter boasts 316 million monthly active users with 500 million tweets per day, and its hashtags offer members of the public a route to signify solidarity, and raise awareness of events around the world in order to achieve Internet and hashtag activism.

Internet activism uses electronic communication most notably social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and citizen blogs among others to disseminate information to large audiences. Notable examples of Internet activism include social media's role in the Arab Spring, and the Occupy Wall Street movements.

Hashtag activism, refers to the use of hashtags, in most instances Twitter hashtags, for the purposes of Internet activism. Notable examples of hashtag activism
include: #BlackLivesMatter, #Kony2012,#StopGamerGate,
and #IceBucketChallenge to name a few.

Twitter diplomacy is the use of social network and microblogging website Twitter by diplomats, heads of state, and leaders of intergovernmental organizations in order to perform outreach activities.

#ThisIsACoup

A recent high profile convergence of Internet activism, hashtag activism, and Twitter diplomacy is #ThisIsACoup. The motivations behind the hashtag, as explained by the organizers:

"We decided to support Francesca's call to launch an online campaign to support the democratic will of the Greek people in the face of extortion by the Eurogroup in its negotiations with Syriza," the statement continued. "The scandalous Eurogroup proposals yesterday made last night the ideal moment to create a hashtag to express and, above all, coordinate, our outrage at the extortion the Greek government and its people were being subject to. (quoted in the Guardian Article #ThisIsACoup: how a hashtag born in Barcelona spread across globe)."

It is clear from the hashtag organisers that they were undertaking online activism. As users were angry at the terms being imposed on Greece and aimed to signify solidarity and raise awareness of the situation. Further outrage was expressed by users adding #BoycottGermany alongside #ThisIsACoup to increase focus on the lead role Germany took in the crisis.

Influential Twitter users often amplify the message of a Twitter hashtag, and help it to reach viral status. One of the most influential accounts related to #ThisIsACoup becoming viral was from the current Prime Minister of Greece, Alexis Tsipras, which is an example of Twitter diplomacy. Nobel Prize winning economist, Paul Krugman, picked up the hashtag and referred to it in a blog post for the New York Times. The post became one of the most popular websites shared alongside the hashtag.

Online activists can have many aims. Sandor Vegh, in *Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice*, divides online activism into three categories:

1. **Awareness and/or Advocacy**, that is to say using the Internet to disseminate alternative news and information.

2. **Organization and/ or Mobilization** refers to calls for offline action.
3. **Action and/or Reaction** refers to online attacks that can be committed by hackers, for example a Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack.

Those behind #ThisIsACoup clearly succeeded in fulfilling the first of Sandor Vegh's categories for online activism, as the hashtag undoubtedly raised awareness. If we look at the figures, for July there were over 600 thousand tweets sent and received by over 140 thousand users whom tweeted using the hashtag. To put it into perspective this is a hashtag that did not exist, at all, up until the situation in Greece emerged.

The hashtag quickly became global, as the top five locations for tweets excluding Greece were the United Kingdom, Spain, United States, France, and Germany. As European officials stayed up all night on July 12 (Sunday) in order to secure a deal, by 09:00 GMT Monday morning the term was tweeted over 377,000 times. Additionally, Google web searches for Greece and Germany increased to reach their highest peak in over 10 years, seemingly corresponding to #ThisIsACoup.

A heat map of #ThisIsACoup tweeted on July 13th (Created using follow the hashtag)

Did #ThisIsACoup make any difference?

In order to address this question, it is important to look at Internet activism in a historical context. Josh Richman in the *Oakland Tribune* in 2002 outlines the case of a Berkeley website which provided a method of sending e-mail peace pleas to Israeli, Palestinian, and U.S. leaders. In one day, 10,000 citizens had used the website, and more than 208,000 had used the website within a week.

It is not difficult to see Twitter being used for online activism today, considering that it allows what Internet users were doing 15 years ago in a more rapid and public manner. Certainly the volume of #ThisIsACoup

tweets far eclipses the Berkeley case. However, it is not clear hashtag activism changes anything.

Historically, the question was whether this type of armchair activism (Berkeley) alone could make a change or whether it would be counterproductive. Many argue it makes people feel like they have done something when they haven't. This is sometimes known as slacktivism (a portmanteau of the words slacker and activism) which is the act of showing support for a cause in order to benefit a person's sense of self-esteem.

This was particularly a concern in the early parts of the 20th century when sending emails and signing e-petitions as a form of activism started to gain force. The concern from activists was that politicians would understand how little effort it would take to click a mouse, and if it took a second to click a mouse, the appropriate amount of acknowledgement would be provided. Isn't it similarly easy for politicians to ignore a hashtag?

Whether or not social media activism can directly bring about political or social change is debatable. It was possible for the Israeli government to block receipt of emails from activists in 2002, and certainly hashtags can be ignored by politicians. Similarly social media platforms themselves can be blocked by governments, and there are several well known cases of political censorship.

However, what is clear from #ThisIsACoup is that social media can raise awareness of a particular cause, allow members of the public to display solidarity on an unprecedented scale, and provide a platform to disseminate alternative news and information rapidly.

This article was originally published on the LSE Impact blog.

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The movement against TTIP-TAFTA on Twitter

Nikos Smyrnaios, University of Toulouse

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is a trade agreement being negotiated between the European Union and the United States for the establishment of a free trade zone between Europe and North America.

The negotiations around it have raised criticism about the lack of transparency of the process, the subordination of democratically elected governments to the interests of big corporations as well as the downgrading of social, health and environmental standards it might cause especially in Europe.

Beyond these fundamental issues the TTIP, also called Transatlantic Free Trade Area (TAFTA), is a misidentified political object because of the complexity of its content but also because of the lack of media coverage despite its importance.

Sampling the online debate

However, the TTIP has been debated with increasing intensity on the internet. The online discussion on the issue occurs on forums, blogs and

social networking sites such as Twitter. To understand the structure of the debate on Twitter I collected two samples of several tenths of thousands of tweets containing the words TTIP and/or TAFTA during two key moments of the anti–TTIP protest.

The first moment was between July 15 and 22 2014. On July 15, the TTIP was discussed in a stormy plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. The same day a European civil initiative, Stop TTIP, submitted a citizen petition demanding the suspension of negotiations. The Stop TTIP initiative brings together 150 organizations from 18 member states of the EU. Throughout the week various demonstrations against the TTIP took place in several European cities.

The second moment was three months later between October 9 and 13 2014. On October 11, some 400 activist groups marched all over Europe against TTIP. At this occasion numerous events were held in several European cities like Hamburg, Berlin, Madrid, Ljubljana, Helsinki, London, Athens, Vienna and Paris.

Hashtag use increase amid protest

The data from Topsy below show that in both cases the TTIP protest produced a peak in the use of the hashtags that started just before and ended right after the demonstrations. However the peak of July 15 with almost 3,500 tweets is much lower than the peak of October 11, which gets up to almost 12,000 tweets.
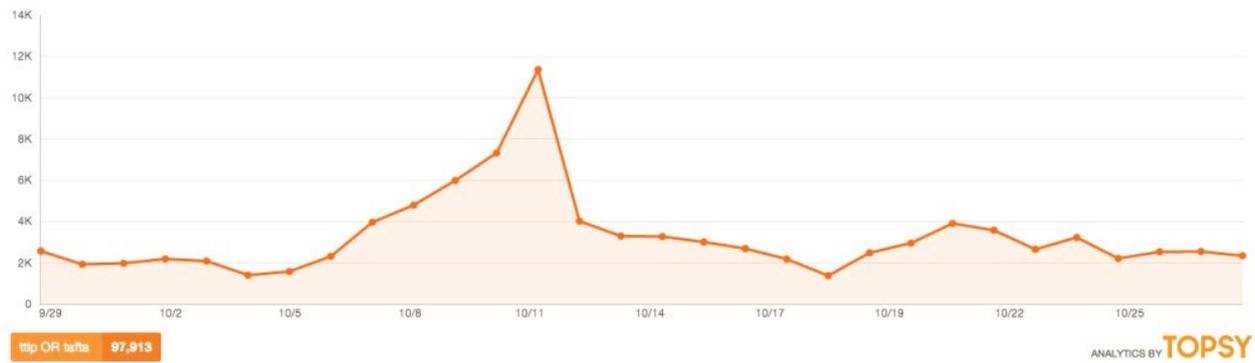
Figure 1: Number of tweets including TTIP of TAFTA on July and on October 2014
(Source: Topsy)

The difference is visible in the comparative chart below that illustrates the ramping up of the use of the keywords TTIP and TAFTA on Twitter between July and October. One can assume that this is also the case with "physical" protests and actions.
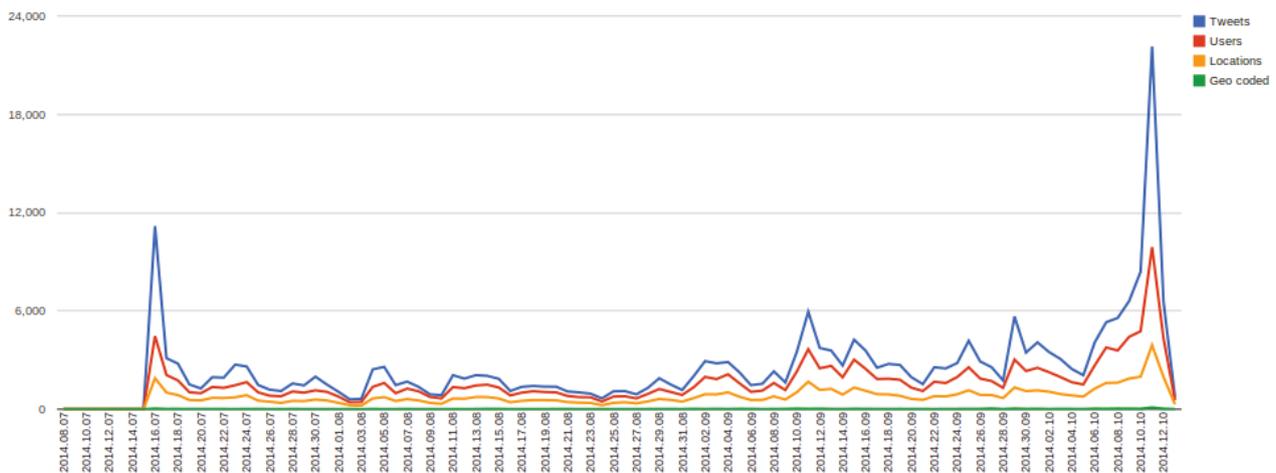
Figure 2: Number of tweets including TTIP or TAFTA between July and October 2014
(Source: my own sample)

A similar trend can be observed on Google (data from June to October 2014). The first big peak of queries including the keywords is on May during the campaign of the European elections in which the European Greens and the Party of the European Left put the issue on the agenda. The second (small) peak is during July and then the bigger yet is on

October revealing a growing awareness about the issue among internet users worldwide.
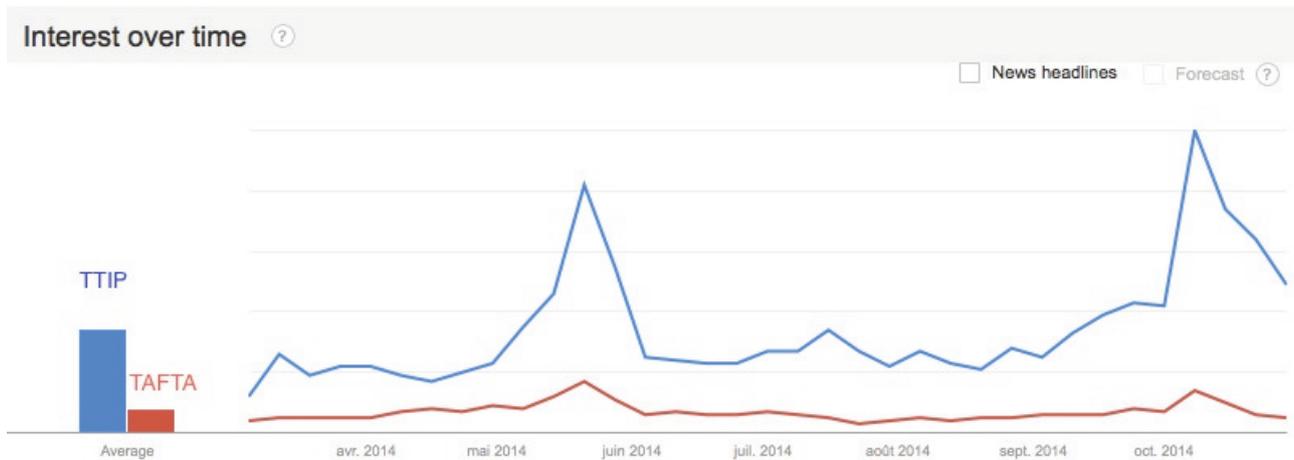
Figure 3: Number of queries on TAFTA and TTIP between March and November 2014 (Source: Google Trends)

Network Analysis

A network analysis of my sample produced the following graphs that represent the networks of interactions (mentions and RTs) between Twitter users, including the two keywords, respectively on July 15–22 and October 9–13.Giant component of RTs and mentions network from 15/07 to 22/07 composed of 20,300 links and 9,508 nodes.
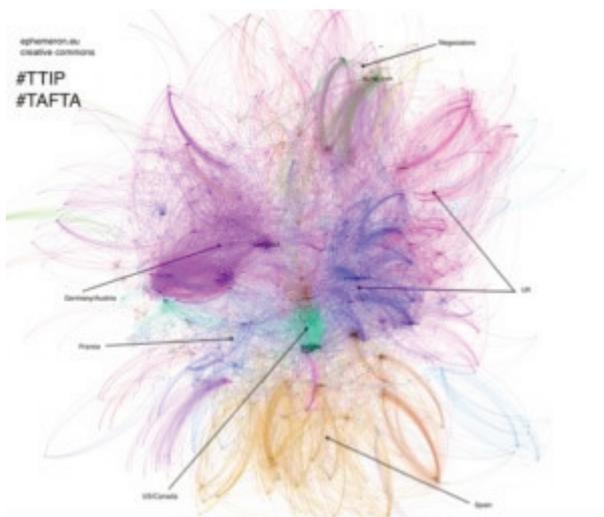
Figure 4: Giant component of RTs and mentions network from July 15 and 22
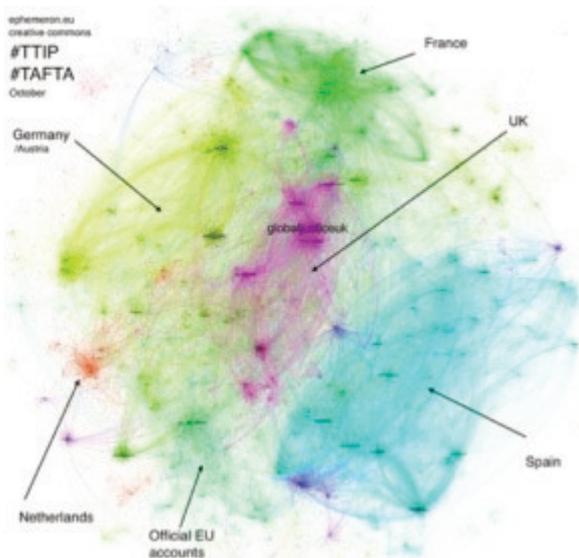
Figure 5: Giant component of RTs and
mentions network between October 9 and
13 2014

*Graph explanation: The dots represent Twitter accounts that produced at least one message with the two keywords. The lines between the dots represent the interactions between these accounts (RT and mentions). The topology of the graph is the result of the intensity of interactions between accounts. The more two accounts are characterized by an intense two-way communication between them, the closer they are on the map. Dot size (smaller to bigger) depends on the number of mentions and RTs received. The colour depends on the community to which they belong. The data was collected with DMI Twitter Analytics The graph was made with Gephi using the Open Ord algorithm.*

Clusters by country or language

The first observation one can make is that the discussion is structured by country or, at least, by language. Indeed, different clusters of accounts are visible that correspond to linguistic or national groups. Of these the larger groups are those of British, Germans, Austrians and Spanish in both graphs. The cluster of French users is bigger in the second graph, suggesting a rise of interest in the country.

The reason is because in these countries the TTIP issue is present in public debates through different angles: weakening of the powers of Länders in

Germany, GMOs and environment in France, defence of public health service in Great Britain, austerity and economic crisis in Spain etc.

On the other hand the cluster of US and Canada based users diminishes and dissolves in the second graph probably because the protest movement of October was mainly European. Globally, European Twitter users involved in the debate are far more numerous than those from North America.

We can conclude that Europeans (on Twitter) feel more concerned by the TTIP or that they are better informed about it. This distribution of activity on Twitter is partially confirmed by statistics on keyword queries on Google as seen in the graph below.

Figure 6: Geographical distribution of queries including TTIP between March and November 2014 (Source: Google Trends)

Low visibility for mainstream media and politicians

The second observation, which is quite remarkable, is the absence of mainstream media among the most cited nodes of the network. Indeed, very few accounts of newspapers, TV channels or press agencies are significantly cited by other users except for alternative or marginal media.

For instance in France the most cited media are the communist daily L'Humanité and web only and politically engaged outlets such as

Reporterre (ecologist) and Mediapart (leftist). This means either that mainstream media downplayed this issue being focused on other topics (this is particularly true on July when there were two important conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine). Or it means that users who are interested in the issue of the TTIP don't trust mainstream media. Or both.

The same is true for established politicians, European institutions and official TTIP negotiators. The US and EU negotiating teams' Twitter accounts have a large number of citations but still are very far from accounts of activists, alternative media and non-governmental organizations. The same goes for established politicians. The only established European political leaders that significantly cited or mentioned are David Cameron and Marine Le Pen. At the same time the political organizations and parties of the ecology and the radical left that oppose the TTIP are much more visible.

A movement dominated by civil society and marginal political forces

Therefore it seems that the issue of TTIP is focused on by parties that are in the margins of the European political scene such the Ecologists, the radical Left, the Pirate Party and, to a lesser extend, right wing populists. The social democrats and the conservatives, who are involved in this debate, like the German SPD depute Bernd Lange, are very few. Obviously this is because the social democrats and conservatives head the EU and are mostly in favour of the TTIP.

But the heart of the debate is made of a multitude of non-governmental organizations, associations, institutes, and think tanks, often created specifically to counter the TTIP. Among the most prominent are Public Citizen and Expose the TPP in the US, Occupy London and the World Development Movement in Britain, Campact in Germany, ATTAC in France and the European initiative Stop TTIP.

This kind of transnational political issue seems to be well adapted to the political usage of Twitter. The discussions that take place are dominated

by opposition to the TTIP, structured by national and linguistic factors, but at the same time, interactions between groups are significant. We can conclude that these are steps towards the emergence of a transnational public sphere, increasingly extended, corresponding to the contours of the EU. Meanwhile, as for the issue of austerity in Europe, the TTIP question seems to be addressed mainly by political forces that are marginalized in power games either nationally or inside the EU.

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Analysing the social fingerprints of pro-independence movements

Arkaitz Zubiaga, University of Warwick

Researchers increasingly turn to social media to analyse the online fingerprints produced by offline political movements. Social media such as Twitter have been exploited to learn about society in events such as elections, major protests and other crises and emergencies. However, the analysis of smaller, more obscure communities (with respect to Twitter, but which have an otherwise salient presence), has been studied to a lesser extent. This is the case of pro–independence movements where a smaller part of an existing country makes claims for its independence from the rest of the country. There might be many pro-independence supporters within that region, but that does not always suffice to make it to Twitter's list of trending topics and/or to reach a broad share of Twitter users, which is however crucial to ensure that the community is visible to others.

Credit: Andreas Eldh/Flickr/CC BY 2.0

My initial attempts at studying pro-independence movements on social media have focused on the cases of the Basque Country and Catalonia, two regions which, as of today, are mostly part of Spain and to a lesser extent of France, but have historically had different cultural and linguistic backgrounds compared to the rest of Spain. The case of these two lands is somewhat different to that of Scotland. While the latter did have an opportunity to vote for leaving or staying in the United Kingdom, the former are not entitled to run a referendum, as Spain deems it unconstitutional. Due to this, Basques and Catalans have organised demonstrations protesting for their 'right to decide'. Here I look at two such demonstrations, both in the form of human chains, one 300 miles long in Catalonia in 2013 (Via Catalana, or 'the Catalan Way'), and the other a 76 miles long in the Basque Country in 2014 (Gure Esku Dago, or 'It's in Our Hands'). In both cases, I collected tweets using Twitter's streaming API both on the day of the demonstration as well as during the week preceding it. I used the main keyword in each case to retrieve tweets relevant to the event in question: #gureeskudago for the Basque demonstration and #viacatalana for the Catalan demonstration.

Table 1 shows the top hashtags that people used in each case. We can observe that other related hashtags emerge, such as #GureEskuBidea (from Basque 'the way is in our hands') and #FemVia (from Catalan 'we make the way'), both in their respective languages. Besides those, a number of hashtags on top of the list are in English, such as #BasquesDecide, #CatalansWantToVote, #Up4Freedom and

#CatalanWay, while there are no hashtags in Spanish. This shows how both communities are using the English language to try and reach out to other communities and users from other countries so as to increase the visibility of the demonstrations and of their demands. The high popularity of the #CatalanWantToVote hashtag in the Basque demonstration shows in turn the solidarity of these two communities, both of which are asking Spain to let them determine by vote their future status.

Table 1: Top hashtags in the Basque and Catalan demonstrations

#gureeskudago (Basque)		#viacatalana (Catalan)	
#GureEskuDago	34,542	#ViaCatalana	238,343
#BasquesDecide	17,463	#Croquetes	53,276
#CatalansWantToVote	1,077	#CatalanWay	29,353
#GureEskuBideaE8	1,028	#11s2013	26,777
#GureEskuBidea	826	#Diada	11,270
#Up4Freedom	686	#Independència	7,982
#Gizakatea	429	#FemVia	7,417
#BasqueDecide	409	#ViaCatalanaTV3	7,260
#EuskalHerria	332	#Independencia	5,810
#NiBanoa	326	#Catalunya	4,991

While looking at hashtags provides valuable insight into these events, one might want to dig deeper into this data by, for instance, looking at the content of the tweets. The largeness of the data sets, which would make the work of a researcher sifting through the data cumbersome, requires the use of automated methods for textual analysis and natural language processing (NLP). However, having to perform the analyses for these communities, each of which has its own language, leads to the following two additional issues to deal with:

1. While Twitter does tell us what language each tweet is written in through its API, this feature is limited to some major languages. Twitter does not identify tweets written in Basque or Catalan at the time of this writing. For a tweet written in Basque or Catalan, Twitter will instead tell us that it is written in another, often unrelated language. Table 2 shows the statistics of languages reported by Twitter for the tweets in the two collections. Spanish is listed

in both cases as the top language, which is unlikely to be true. Moreover, the fact that Bosnian, Indonesian and Tagalog are so popular in the case of the Basque demonstration is implausible pointing to the limitations of Twitter's language identification algorithm. While the majority of tweets will most likely be in Basque and Catalan, Twitter will never know that, and we get instead other sets of languages from its API. The accurate identification of the language of a tweet, especially in the case of languages spoken by smaller groups of people, is still an open research task which we have been recently working on through the organisation of a workshop and shared task called TweetLID.

2. The automated linguistic analysis of tweets is often performed with well-known tools for NLP such as GATE, psychologically informed word counts analysis tools such as LIWC, or bespoke solutions for Twitter such as Tweet NLP. However, these tools tend to be crafted to perform well for a few major languages and hence, they leave much to be desired when they are applied to new languages. The development of both linguistic resources and NLP tools suitable for these languages will be crucial for a successful analysis of this kind of data.

Table 2: Twitter's automated language identification results

#gureeskudago (Basque)		#viacatalana (Catalan)	
Spanish	10,518	Spanish	160,771
Bosnia	3,973	Portuguese	24,314
Indonesian	3,936	French	20,556
Tagalog	3,893	Italian	19,266
Croatian	3,853	English	17,225
Estonian	3,552	Romanian	15,233
English	2,786	Indonesian	4,419
Romanian	1,626	Slovak	3.622
Finnish	799	Welsh	2,859
Portuguese	578	Tagalog	2,763

I am confident that within the next few years we will see an increasing body of research studying political issues around other such smaller

communities from around the world and we will be developing more sophisticated techniques for textual analysis of tweets for lesser-resourced, minority languages.

Arkaitz Zubiaga is a post-doctoral research fellow at the University of Warwick, currently involved in the PHEME FP7 project on the study of social media rumours. His research revolves around the study of the spread of news and events through social media and especially the role of citizen journalists in news reporting. Some of his recent research has dealt with the curation, verification and classification of newsworthy information shared on social media involving computational research in fields like text mining, natural language processing and social computing, but also including an interdisciplinary perspective from the social sciences such as journalism and psychology. He can be found tweeting as @arkaitz.

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Tweeting for peace? Twitter and the 2014 Ardoyne parade dispute

Paul Reilly, University of Sheffield

On 12th July 2013, there were violent clashes between loyalist protesters and the Police Service of Northern Ireland after a ruling by the Parades Commission that prevented the return of an Orange Order parade past the Ardoyne shops in North Belfast. The subsequent failure of political representatives to broker a solution to this impasse, highlighted by the continued presence of a loyalist protest camp in nearby Twaddell Avenue, led many observers to fear that there would be a repeat of this violence the following year.

Tensions in the area were further raised when unionist and loyalist leaders announced that they were planning a 'graduated response' to the Parades Commission's decision to alter the route of the return parade for the second year in a row. These plans were heavily criticised by nationalist residents' groups, such as the Greater Ardoyne Residents' Collective (GARC). By way of response, a member of GARC unsuccessfully tried to obtain a high court injunction to prevent the outward leg of the parade from passing the Ardoyne shops on the morning of the 12th July.

Credit: Eric Jones/CC BY-SA 2.0

Fears of a repeat of the sectarian clashes previously seen in Ardoyne and elsewhere were not realised in July 2014. Northern Ireland Secretary of State Teresa Villiers praised all sides for their role in delivering the most peaceful Twelfth in recent times. Therefore, this study, funded by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, was designed to investigate the ways in which the peaceful protests of loyalists and nationalist residents in July 2014 were digitally mediated. In particular, it focused on how users responded to rumours spread on the micro-blogging site, which were argued to have had a negative impact upon cross-community relations in areas such as North Belfast. The nature of the debate amongst these 'tweeters' was also investigated, with a specific focus on whether they used inflammatory, sectarian language in response to the events as they unfolded.

A keyword search, 'Ardoyne' was used to identify tweets that referred specifically to the decision to reroute the parade by the Ligoniel Orange lodges in North Belfast. The 'Ardoyne' tweets peaked at 7pm on the 12th July (see Figure 1). One interpretation of this finding might be that that viewers of 'flagship' teatime news programmes such as BBC Newsline and UTV Live, which had provided coverage of the day's events, had turned to social media to seek out information about the homeward leg of the parade.

Figure 1: Tweets mentioning Ardoyne,
12th July 2014

A critical thematic analysis of all relevant tweets was then conducted in order to analyse how critics and supporters of the Orange Order used Twitter to respond to the rerouting of the Ardoyne parade.

Most peaceful Twelfth in years but little sign of end to Ardoyne impasse

The absence of violence in the contested interface area meant that there was very little for citizens or professional journalists to comment on during this period. Nevertheless, professional journalists were still responsible for the most frequently retweeted content referring to the events in Ardoyne during this period.

Analysis of the words most frequently used to characterise the morning parade showed how peaceful it had been (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Most frequently occurring words
in Ardoyne sample (11-14 July 2014)

The vast majority of original tweets in the sample expressed support for

all those who had contributed to the morning parade passing off without incident. The few politicians who commented on Ardoyne expressed similar sentiments. North Belfast Sinn Fein MLA Gerry Kelly tweeted that it had been the quietest Eleventh night in years and that the morning parade has passed off "without trouble." However, politicians tended to praise the behaviour of their respective constituents while criticising the intransigence of the 'other' community.

A small minority of tweeters blamed the 'other' side for the Ardoyne dispute, with little sign of rational debate about how to resolve it. This tended to revolve around crude stereotypes of groups and political leaders, rather than specific individuals, except for a few notable exceptions such as one loyalist woman who was identified as being responsible for sharing a sectarian image on Facebook. Republicans characterised loyalists as a "sectarian hate mob", lacking the "muscle" to force their way past the Ardoyne shops. Loyalists themselves criticised the Parades Commission and the PSNI for supposedly rewarding the republican violence in July 2012 by rerouting the return parade away from the Ardoyne shops. The rerouted parade was said to be further evidence of republican bigotry and intolerance towards unionist and loyalist culture.

Twitter users move quickly to debunk rumours and misinformation

Rumours in the Ardoyne tweet sample appeared to have a short life span. Loyalists were accused of digitally altering pictures in order to portray GARC and the nationalist residents in a negative light. A picture of one of the protesters that had gathered outside the Ardoyne shops began to circulate on Twitter shortly after 7.30pm on 12th July. The placard being held aloft by the protester contained a mock-up road sign indicating that the Orange Order was not welcome in the area. Visual evidence suggesting that this was a photoshopped image was shared on Twitter within a few minutes of the tweet being posted. The original image showed that the protester was involved in a peaceful Christian protest at the shop fronts. His placard contained the motto "Love Thy Neighbour," not the anti–Orange Order slogan that had featured in the doctored image. This was corroborated by an image of the same scene taken by

BBC NI journalist Kevin Sharkey a few hours earlier and shared on the site.

Loyalists also responded quickly to online rumours suggesting that an image of Oscar Knox, a five year old who had died of a rare form of childhood cancer, had been burnt on an Eleventh night bonfire in Randalstown, County Antrim. A picture supposedly showing the bonfire began to circulate on Twitter late on 11th July, prompting many angry responses from Twitter users. This rumour was quickly refuted and condemned by unionist and loyalists on Twitter. The Randalstown Sons of Ulster Flute band asked people to retweet an image of their Eleventh night bonfire, confirming that no image of Oscar Knox had been burnt and stating that the five year old "was a hero". One tweet provided a link to the original image of the bonfire that had been taken by photographer Stephen Barnes in July 2013. It was noticeable that the number of tweets referring to the Knox incident sharply declined after this contradictory evidence began to circulate online. As had been seen with the image of the GARC protester, Twitter provided a platform for both sides to correct misinformation and rumours that had the potential to increase the sectarian tensions surrounding the Ardoyne impasse.

Social media as tools to help defuse sectarian tensions around marches?

Although there was no equivalent of the "crowdsourced newswire" that emerged via NPR editor Andy Carvin's Twitter account during the 'Arab Spring.' Twitter did provide users with an array of information sources courtesy of the citizen and professional journalists who were tweeting their perspectives on events as they unfolded. Citizens were also quick to check the veracity of the user-generated content that was emerging from the scene, such as the photoshopped images that were evident in the sample. While acknowledging that social media has often been used to reinforce divisions between rival communities in Northern Ireland, this study suggested that Twitter may have untapped potential in facilitating modes of communication that help defuse sectarian tensions around the marching season.

This article was originally published on the Think: Leicester blog and also appeared on the LSE Politics and Policy blog.

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Politics, divisions and (mis)use of social media

Mokhtar Elareshi, University of Tripoli

With increasing political divisions in Libya and ongoing civil war, social media websites and interactive media have been used to deepen the conflict and feed violence among Libyans. Political differences and disputes have been transferred from the real world to the virtual world and, in some cases, vice versa. The past four years have been a time of political upheaval and reform in Libya. The reasons for the changes are varied, but they include the high rate of unemployment among the youth and government corruption. However, the use of social media by anti- and pro-government groups alike has been widely publicised, to the extent that some commentators suggest that social media have been afforded too much credit for the political changes and reforms taking place in the country. Nevertheless, social media sites have become a critical outlet for describing and documenting attacks, coordinating protests and communicating information and news to local and non-local audiences.

Credit: Garrett Heath/CC BY 2.0

The problem with social media use in Libya goes back to early 2011, when (anti-government) activists used sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to recruit young people against Gaddafi's regime. This can be seen as a turning point in the history of Libyan media and in the relationships or social divisions between Libyans themselves. Some believe that these calls to action were somehow successful in changing the Libyan political landscape. However, since then, these social media platforms no longer play the same role 'fairly', as they have altered the way they use news and information and how they communicate with other users. Since the beginning of political pluralism and the emergence of dozens of Libyan parties and organisations, no one could predict how social media sites would become platforms for strife and polarisation, a way to carry out political purges, and a means to verbally abuse, insult and slander members of other parties or organisations. They have thus become a tool with which to threaten others and for the promotion of hatred and incitement to violence. Many Libyans' pages on social media sites feature an abundance of hate speech and threats against other factions and divisions. In fact, every day, Libyan social media is filled with controversies, conflicts and rumours. This has increased discourses of insults and verbal abuse in the country's political scene, reflecting the widely divergent political views and territorial conflicts taking place in Libya.

Libyans themselves have recently expressed regret about social media platforms having transformed from something which had great merit in supporting change in the country by means of uniting and serving

Libyans' shared goals into a cyber space which promotes chaos, fuels strife and targets individuals in political parties or from other tribes. Since the Libyan uprising in 2011, social media sites have teemed with suspicious pages and bloggers' accounts. There are now electronic groups and militias such as ISIS and Jihadists behind the use of social media to spread hatred and unrest and to increase the level of division between Libyans for their own purposes. These electronic groups and militias unfortunately have supporters and followers who believe in their messages and post or tweet for them. What is happening in Libya today can therefore be regarded as a direct result of what has been posted on social media, particularly on Facebook pages.

Increasing numbers of Libyans, especially young adults, have day after day started following social media more closely, in particular, Facebook and Twitter. Statistically, the number of social media users in the country jumped from around 360,000 in 2011 to over one million users in 2016. Libya now ranks tenth amongst Arab countries in terms of the number of Facebook users, despite the widespread lack of internet access and electricity. Consequently, Facebook has become the most widely used cyber space platform in Libya. This means, on the other hand, that all of the speeches condoning violence pass through this platform. This eruption of violence over the last few years constitutes a major threat and has had a role in shaping the future of the country. This also indicates that one of the main reasons for the continuing violence and chaos in Libya is the content published on social media platforms.

In the last few years in Libya, a number of activists, journalists and human rights defenders, such as Muftah al-Qatrani and Salwa Bughaighis, have been assassinated or abducted based on their activities on social media sites. They were followed and their activities on their personal accounts were monitored in addition to other actions. The killing of these activists is the latest in a string of attacks on politicians, activists and journalists who have spoken out against the actions of certain militias. The point is that these acts have been encouraged and organised through social media. It can be argued that the chaos promoted on social media sites is linked to users being young, and therefore lacking maturity and culture.

Those young users seem to have been 'brainwashed', as they are ready to respond to any calls for violence against others who may have different political views. The situation in Libya thus indicates that social media are a double-edged weapon, which have turned into frightening tools through users' misuse of the free flow of information. Rather than using them productively, many harness them for demolition and to create chaos.

After the fall of Gaddafi's regime and the emergence of political parties (whereas before there was only one), several changes took place, such as the way people use social media for either political mobilisation or social polarisation based on tribes and regions. The content that users in the country post and tweet tends to foster bigotry and extremism towards others rather than reconciliation. Ideally, cyber space would be used as a tool for communication with others and for respectfully and peacefully debating the country's problems and solutions. Most Libyans have, by now, realised that after having only one party and joint mobilisation calls in one direction (Gaddafi's system), many calls are now made from one group against other groups, each one reduced to defending its existence. Hence, the negative values of social media have become clear and have caused a split in the fabric of the country, as they are used without any legal controls or moral scruples. It seems that, as a result, social media have become a problem in their own right and an aspect that should be taken into great consideration.

In light of the growing risks posed by social media, especially to the social structure of Libyan society, and their negative effects, it can be argued that such platforms should be subjected to legal control procedures to ensure that they are not used for incitement to commit violence or crimes, or for threatening society, especially in times of crises and conflicts. If no legal action is taken to safeguard users, it would only encourage more use of these sites to incite violence and undertake personal or partisan purges. I would finish with this quote: "We were happy, there was hope but now even that hope has started to fade."

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Between enabling and restricting dissent: The two faces of social media

Arne Hintz, Cardiff University

From the 'Twitter' and 'Facebook-Revolutions' in Iran in 2009 and Egypt in 2011 to the more recent activities of the Yo Soy 123 movement in Mexico, the Gezi Park protests in Turkey, or the Umbrella movement in Hong Kong, social media have been widely credited as an important force in supporting social and political change. While over-enthusiastic and technologically-deterministic notions of social media-based uprisings have been criticised, many observers maintain that digital platforms have been 'effective catalysts' for change and amplifiers of social movement activism. They have expanded the reach of protest mobilisations, enabled the creation of forums for free speech and for shared social and political criticism, and generated social spaces for developing critical discourses, especially where an open public sphere does not exist. Beyond facilitating protest, they have been vehicles to monitor elections and expose wrong-doings, and they have served as key platforms for 'citizen witnessing' and other forms of citizen journalism and grassroots reporting. As mechanisms for peer production and for sharing remixes, memes and mash-ups, they

have become an essential infrastructure of contemporary participatory culture.

As crucial sites for protest and dissent, social media continue (and expand) the roles played by earlier forms of social movement media, alternative media, and 'our media'. On a variety of platforms, these media have been used for spreading dissident information and have served as communication infrastructure for social movements – from the alternative press to video activism, and to the Indymedia network and grassroots tech groups (Milan, 2013). However most of these earlier media practices have been characterized by one decisive factor: they have been self-organised and self-managed, owned and controlled by civil society groups, typically in a non-profit, open and participatory fashion.

Social media, in contrast, are owned by private sector entities and operate under a commercial logic. As pointed out by Leistert, rather than guided by activist concerns, they are centred around 'a complex and dynamic set of highly opaque tools for selling advertisements, commodities and data'. With user data collection and analysis as their main business model, they track our online activities and preferences, and they provide a semi-public sphere of free and democratic communication only insofar as this aligns with their commercial goals. Social media users are customers, not citizens.

This has led to serious challenges for activists, and here I want to point to three of these.

First, the 'big data' generated through Google, Facebook and others is at the heart of current surveillance trends, as highlighted by the Snowden leaks. The 'data mine' of social media allows for the detailed monitoring and analysis of Internet users, including their locations, activities, preferences, friends and networks, and political orientations. Social media-based intelligence gathering (or SOCMINT) has become an important part of police investigations, including those that address activism and protest. Their use for law enforcement and predictive policing is complemented by data-based categorising of people along

social, economic and political lines. The consequences of this have been felt, particularly, in the aftermath of 'social media revolutions' in the Middle East and elsewhere, where the use of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube served as a means for the state to identify and arrest protesters. In Iran, Tunisia, Syria and elsewhere, authorities have used social media to scrape user data and infect the computers of opposition supporters with spying software.

Second, as the surveillance examples show, social media companies have been prone to government interventions and pressures. Robert Hannigan, Director of the British Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), has called social media networks "terrorists' command and control networks of choice", and Prime Minister David Cameron added that he would "step up pressure on web companies such as Facebook and Twitter to do more to co-operate with the intelligence agencies". Social media platforms have been blocked in countries such as China, Iran, Pakistan, Thailand and Turkey, often as a direct reaction to protests, uprisings, and criticism of governments. Prosecutions against bloggers and social media users for comments posted online have risen sharply, too – in Britain alone, at least 6,000 people a year were investigated between 2012 and 2015, in some cases leading to severe sentences.

Third, Internet companies are self-regulating what they deem acceptable speech. Prominent examples have included Facebook censoring pictures of breastfeeding mothers, as well as cartoons depicting naked people, such as a naked Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, and Apple deleting an app from its app store that marked US drone strikes on a geographic map, but also the take-down of activist pages by Facebook in the run-up to protest events 'as part of a growing effort by Facebook to crack down on the presence of political groups on its network'. In addition to direct interventions, the algorithmic sorting of content can weaken the visibility of activist and dissident content – for example, when Google's inclusion of 'truthfulness' as a criteria in the search ranking prioritizes mainstream narratives. User-based measures to report problematic content – such as the Facebook Report Abuse button – are sometimes used strategically to stifle dissent.

Social media platforms have provided an important means of activist and dissident communication, but they are also key sites where the tension between free communication and the emerging reality of restriction and censorship is played out. They are enlisted by the state to police the net and monitor their users, but they also play an active role in developing and enforcing new rules for allowing as well as restricting information, and they thus provide and withdraw vital spaces and resources for communication.

The points raised in this blog post are discussed in more detail in the article 'Restricting digital sites of dissent: commercial social media and free expression' and in the book 'Critical Perspectives on Social Media and Protest'.

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Sofia in 2033. If the protests fail

Robert Phillips, Jr., American University in Bulgaria

Sofia, 01 November 2033

It is a warm overcast day. The forecast warns that it will reach 30 for the sixth day in a row and that people with respiratory problems should remain indoors. On your way to your second job, you don't pass many people on the streets. Across from the Dvoretza in the officially designated free-speech zone is yet another protest by yet more malcontents. Today's protest is pretty large—maybe 60–70 people protesting against the latest iteration of the government. You try to remember the coalition of letters that make up the current super grand coalition, but you get lost in the jumble of letters.

Credit: BMW Spirit/Flickr/CC-BY-2.0

The parties used to run against each other, but that was before they figured out that it was easier for them to create a super grand coalition. The same five parties have been in power for the past twelve years. You thought about joining one of the parties a few years back, but you did not have the 5,000 leva yearly party dues and dropped the idea.

You look at the faces of the protesters—tired and worn. Nearly all, like you, are beginning to grey or went grey years ago. There are a few children in the crowd attached to their grannies, but as usual almost no one in between. You read some of the signs—the usual complaints about work and corruption. However, you have to decipher several of the signs because their meanings are hidden in misspellings and impossible grammatical constructions. On the benches nearby, the only people watching are pensioners, homeless people, and unfortunate refugees from the latest wave.

It has been a tough twenty years all over the world. Today's non-stop news brings non-stop stories: civil wars; another action by the Common European Border Protection Force (this time only 30 people were killed; it is usually more); another super-typhoon killed 15,000; and some Chinese investors just bought that big American soft drinks company.

Here at home, the government has lurched from small crisis to crisis. You remember that these crises used to spawn larger protests, but that was before biometric scanners were installed in the billboards. Advertisers said that they would save you time and energy by showing you only those advertisements that you wanted to see. But it didn't take too long to realize that the companies turned around and sold the information to the government. So now, your face, name, financial history, and health conditions are read every time you walk by a billboard. Of course, this pretty much destroyed most large public protests after rumors circulated of protesters losing their jobs or having problems getting needed medicines.

You look down at your scratched up wrist phone. You couldn't afford to buy the P-27 model and the new P-28 model will have to wait as well.

You're expecting a call from your daughter in Shanghai in a few minutes, so you need to get someplace a little quieter. Like most of her friends, she went away for university and never came back. You would like to hold her in your arms like you did when she was a little girl. She's only four hours away on the newest superjets, but the super cost of the ticket means that you'll just have to do with a scratchy small screen conversation.

You think about the situation that you find yourself in. You know you live in a democracy because you voted in the last elections. OK, not because you thought your vote meant anything, but because you wanted to win a 13th salary in the election lottery. You can work wherever you want—of course, if you have the connections to find a job. You can think what you want—but it's probably better not to think too loudly. You can protest—as long as it is in the officially designated protest area. You could even immigrate—but most places only want younger people and your computer skills are about a year behind current and, anyway, it takes a lot of money to immigrate.

You wonder how it all came to this. And you remember seeing some really smart guy on a TEDx clip—he talked about the collapse of civic trust and representative government. You think back to a politics class you took at university. That political philosopher…what was his name?…Constant. You did great on the exam because you actually read and remembered what he wrote. He wrote about individual liberty and political liberty. Individual liberty was about getting to do what you want to do—you liked individual liberty. Political liberty was not so interesting. It was something about all of us getting together to decide what was best for all of us, not just some of us. You remember that Constant warned that if we don't find the time and energy to become involved politically that someone else would be very happy to become involved for us.

You remember in 2013 during the spring and summer protests that some people talked about making representative government really work. They said that the challenge in Bulgaria was not unique. Other places were having similar problems with representative democracy. Other people also felt detached from their parliaments and presidents and parties and prime

ministers, so they just disengaged. Like in most of the world, even in most of Europe, it was easier to just go to work or more fun to go out than to spend time thinking how we could make government work better and smarter and cleaner and then going out and making it happen.

But it didn't seem very important then.

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PART V

Health, emotion, activism

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Health, ICTs and the social

Stefania Vicari, University of Sheffield

In 1999 American physician Tom Ferguson coined the word 'epatient' to describe individuals who are "equipped, enabled, empowered and engaged" in their health care decisions. While fighting with multiple myeloma, he advocated for a patient–doctor relationship that could overturn traditional paternalistic approaches to health care and management. Over fifteen years later, now potentially anybody can engage in health debates on social media platforms, with patients' experiential knowledge often becoming a first port of call for individuals seeking health information. Online – and often with a smartphone in their hands – people talk about health, connect around health and advocate for health. But what are the implications of this digital health socialization?

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Digital Communication and Health Discourse

In 2011, American writer Deborah Kogan published the piece "How Facebook saved my son's life", reporting on how posting pictures of her ill son on Facebook helped her identify his life threatening condition. This and other cases show that online networking may add to or even partially replace traditional patient–physician consultations, especially in diagnostic phases. In fact, patient-centred social network sites like PatientsLikeMe are now being generated to ease health social networking, for instance to store, share and connect around information on symptoms, therapies, and drugs.

Social media can then clearly ease health information exchange and knowledge building, but how does their commercial networked infrastructure impact the way patient-generated knowledge is made and used? In technical terms, the fact that social media's network structures shape personalised input obviously affects the supposed "spontaneity" of social networking dynamics. In economic terms, the possibility of personal health data becoming object of commercial use raises ethical issues. Part of the data shared on PatientsLikeMe, for instance, are sold to "partners" but we are left wondering for how long these data will be used by "partners" and – maybe most importantly – how and when these partners' economic benefit and scientific outputs will pay back to patients.

Social media platforms can ease interactive dynamics among individuals

with shared health conditions like in patient communities, but they may also host health debates crowdsourced by a wider variety of contributors. Angelina Jolie's May 2013 and March 2015 New York Times op-eds on her decision to undergo preventive surgery, for instance, shed public light on her rare genetic disorder – the BRCA1 gene mutation. A Twitter advanced search for "BRCA and Jolie" in the month following Jolie's first op-ed, returns thousands of tweets where people discuss her decision and the meaning of preventing surgery, but also the implications of having patents on genes, the costs of genetic testing, insurance policies, and rare diseases. How can this online public debate impact patient communities, the general public and, more specifically, health policing and health cultural understandings?

Digital Communication and Health Activism

Health discourse dynamics may mingle with – or lead to – different forms of activism. A recent case of health protest following offline and online public debate is that promoted by the Italian pro-Stamina Movement, mobilised by patient groups demanding funding for compassionate use of the Stamina stem cell therapy in patients with rare neurological diseases. The case came to the fore when a popular Italian TV programme went on air in February 2013. While medicine Nobel prizes and national scientific committees dismissed the procedure as unscientific and risky, patient groups mobilised "a web-based mass action, with protests, sit-ins and a twice-a-week campaign". Hence, on the one side, (controversial) mainstream media coverage enacted public debate and online interactions bolstered patients' activism. On the other side, scientists' expressed their opinion primarily via scientific journals (e.g., Nature, EMBO). Could then online connectivity help overcome the still strong divide between patient groups and scientific experts, especially in the way they interact – or do not interact – on controversial health issues?

While health activism is nothing new, social movement research has recently discussed the emergence of new forms of protest where individuals fluidly connect and disconnect via online social networking. Bennett and Segerberg suggest that digital networking per-

se is replacing traditional organisations, with individuals using their personal narratives – rather than organisation or party membership – to engage first in online networking and then in offline activism. While health communication and social movement research have not yet investigated the impact of connective action on health activism, we may once again draw upon a contemporary example to start raising questions on the impact of connectivity – and connective action – on health activism. In 2010 Stephen Sutton, a British teenager, was diagnosed with colorectal cancer. When two years later his cancer was deemed incurable, Sutton made a wish list of fundraising events and became very active online (stephensstory.co.uk), increasingly receiving mainstream media coverage and public attention. As of November 2015, over one year after his death, Stephen Sutton is survived by the Justgiving "Stephen's fundraising page" that reports a raised fund of almost 5 million pounds, the "Stephen's story" Facebook page liked more than 1.3 million times, and the Twitter account @_StephensStory with over 178,000 followers. This means that while historic TV broadcasting events – like US Labor Day telethon – are discontinued because of "new realities of television viewing and philanthropic giving", personalised digital storytelling is becoming a new source for health public engagement.

The Democratisation of Health?

In a way or another, these stories – from Kogan's to Sutton's – all show that digital communication practices can enhance diversified health discourse and activism processes and possibly help transform traditional approaches to health care and management. However, they also show that a series of technical, economic, ethical and cultural questions still need to be addressed to assess the real potential of digital communication in what may be seen as health democratisation processes.

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The public and private faces of food activism in the fight against childhood obesity in the UK

Jennifer Cole, University of Leicester

In February 2016 Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt declared childhood obesity as national emergency. This was in response to the announcement that the controversial sugar tax, championed by celebrity chef Jamie Oliver, would be introduced in 2018. Whilst Oliver campaigned for the tax as deterrent against the consumption of sugary drinks, critics of the tax including other celebrity chefs, felt that the tax would not be effective in combating the obesity crisis. They suggested that this tax would ultimately only benefit the government by generating a new revenue stream, rather than cutting the number of drinks consumed.

Top medical journal The BMJ has also published many articles on the debate, a whole range of experts echo the pros and cons of sugar taxation discussed by these celebrity chefs. So why is it celebrity chefs not these qualified experts that we are hearing from in our mainstream media?

This role that celebrity chefs were playing caught my attention as it reminded me of the work by Tania Lewis. Lewis suggests that traditional

roles in expertise such as nutritionists are now being filled by popular lifestyle experts. This is demonstrated in the coverage of the sugar tax where the sole expert presented alongside rationales for its introduction is Jamie Oliver. Oliver's celebrity status and the fact that he is well known as being a father with four (soon to be five) children, adds credibility to his cause and allows him access to publicise the issue in a way that a traditional expert would be unlikely to achieve within the same time frame. Throughout this debate, Oliver has becomes the media-appointed face of food and children's health in the UK.

Drawing on the celebrity as a culturally powerful figure to front the campaign is a modern form of activism where attention in generated from TV shows, blogs and tweets, This allows for direct engagement with the public and creates hype which has the potential, as seen here, to lead to changes in legislation.

There are also links between the debates emerging here and my PhD research. My research did not set out to analyse how people felt about the amount of sugar in products or childhood obesity, but in a context where the majority of participants were mothers and all had a strong interest in food as an integral part of their lifestyles the topic was inevitably discussed. The women in my study did not consider themselves to be activists in the way that many of them referred to Jamie Oliver (who at the time of my research was fronting the campaigns to change school dinners), because they were not public figures and their actions did not aim to have wider reaching social implications. Yet many felt that their singular efforts, combined with those of like-minded parents, could contribute to a future society with a more rational approach to food education and to tackling obesity.

Credit: USDA/Flickr/CC BY 2.0

The women in my study were readers of popular food magazines and some used the magazines as manuals to educate themselves about good food practices, again showing a reliance on popular expertise. Despite this, many felt that it was wrong that future generations would also be relying on media texts not formal educative programmes for their food knowledge. Nearly all of the mothers felt it was morally wrong that those involved in educating their children around health (education and the media) were forcing negative messages around food and body image on to their children. There was a distinct backlash about making children, whatever their weight, conscious of obesity. Instead these women were promoting the positives of healthy and delicious food to their children, with the aims that this would equip them to take care of themselves and ultimately lower their risk of becoming part of the childhood obesity statistic. They did this, as one mother said 'out of a moral duty not just as being a parent and wanting the best for my child, but out of common sense for a more positive future' – and this starts to echo the semantics of Oliver's more formal political discourse.

The mothers felt engaged in a personal campaign to dispel what they considered worrying myths around food being preached to their children. They reinforced ideas of good eating rather than worrying about getting fat or thin, they strongly supported a balanced approach to food consumption. This they saw evidence in the way their children responded was more effective than just saying no to ingredients such as sugar. It was this mentality that many of these women hoped would become be the core message of the formal institutions, outside of their family domains.

Here we see there are two battles for children's health simultaneously at play; one in an open public and political forum, and another far more private and personal taking place within the domestic family sphere. Both are equally important in changing the tide of the emerging obesity crisis and both could, and should, be considered as activism based on the emotive core values of moral duty that drive them, which have such deeply personal roots but much wider social implications.

Perhaps then the perfect recipe for activism is a combined effort of the public and private sphere activists where they can both play a role in forcing legislators to act on key issues.

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Disability rights advocacy goes digital

Filippo Trevisan, American University

In 1980, scholar and activist Vic Finkelstein pictured a future in which "*impaired persons will […] no longer be oppressed by disabling social conventions and disabling environments but will be absorbed in the mainstream of social interactions.*" In his vision, technology was to be an important enabler of social change and play a fundamental role in the "liberation" of disabled people. Today, we live in a world where connectivity is ubiquitous and new media technologies foster "always on" lifestyles. Yet, Finkelstein's hypothesis remains largely untested and our understanding of the relationship between disability and the Internet is incomplete.

"Digital disability" studies, as Gerard Goggin and Christopher Newell described the study of the relationship between disability and digital media just over a decade ago, have grown substantially in recent years. Yet, virtually all of this work has framed the discussion in terms of access and accessibility. Indeed, these are crucial issues that ought to be top priorities for policy-makers, technology developers, and disability campaigners. At the same time, however, I also believe that limiting ourselves to this perspective will lead us to overlook an essential part of the

picture. A different aspect that certainly deserves to be explored is that of online disability rights advocacy.

Credit: The Leadership Conference/Flickr/
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As a passionate observer of the potential of new media technologies for empowering groups that traditionally are excluded from the civic arena, I have been watching with great interest as UK disability rights groups "tuned" into social media in ever increasing numbers from late 2010 onwards. This was a major shift in their approach to technology as, as recently as 2009, disability organizations appeared somewhat distrustful towards ICTs and particularly reluctant to engage with social media.

All this changed suddenly in response to the then Conservative–Liberal Democrat UK government's proposals for a radical overhaul of disability welfare in 2010, which challenged some of the main principles behind disability welfare entitlement and allocations. Very rapidly, a range of different disability groups decided that it was time to use digital media for mobilizing, organizing, and challenging legacy media narratives of disability welfare. Not only established charity organizations experimented with innovative tactics in digital campaigning, but new collaborations were forged too, sometimes where ancient rifts had existed, and wholly new groups of disabled activists were formed online. Given their internal structure, type of leadership, and relationship with the Internet, I proposed in previous work that these groups could be seen as falling into three different categories, including:

1. **Formal organizations:** pre-existing disability organizations that use the Internet to boost their campaigns (including both non-profit and membership groups);
2. **"Digitized" activists:** experienced disabled activists who met in person at a protest event and thereafter decided to set up a Web presence as a way to sustain their efforts in the longer term; and
3. **Digital action networks:** activist networks founded by disabled bloggers and operating exclusively online.

Among the most high-profile representatives of this new digital wave in disability rights advocacy were groups such as Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC), The Broken of Britain, The Campaign for a Fair Society, We Are Spartacus, and issue-focused coalitions such as The Hardest Hit. For many of these groups campaigning online against the UK welfare reform became a journey of discovery. Since 2010, some of these groups were disbanded, some disappeared for some time and then re-appeared with a different name, while others continue to this day under the same banner, most notably DPAC. My impression is that disability advocacy in Britain is in a state of flux and digital media interact with other factors to constantly re-shape individual groups, their membership, and tactics. However, in broader terms, I believe that the typology I proposed back in 2011 still stands.

One thing that has really struck me as about these groups is the impressive array of online platforms on which they have been able to operate, often displaying terrific technological know-how. From Facebook to Twitter, and from websites to blogs, these groups have been capable of coordinated efforts that combine multiple digital outlets in a complementary fashion. Moreover, interviews with disabled bloggers from digital action networks revealed that familiarity with ICTs, combined with direct experience of impairment, can generate innovative uses of online platforms and "DIY" solutions to some of the difficulties determined by poor technological design.

There is vibe and excitement in the UK around digital disability rights campaigns, not least because "they make disabled people feel less useless,"

as a disabled activist once told me. Disability rights advocacy is alive and energized both online and offline, with the addition of new faces, who often join through digital channels and bring a wealth of experience with digital storytelling. In particular, personal stories have come to the fore in many of these groups' efforts to stop the welfare reform in recent years. This has been the case, for example, with DPAC's "ILF Stories" campaign in 2013, which used personal accounts to provide an overview of the beneficial effect that the Independent Living Fund has on disabled people's lives and illustrate what its closure would mean for impaired and chronically ill people. While the use of tactics such as this one would have been unthinkable just a few years ago, given the controversial role of personal stories in disability advocacy, the groups experimenting with them have learnt from each other, as well as drawn inspiration from international examples. Looking at the ILF stories, similar campaigns organized in previous years by U.S. disability organizations to protect Medicaid provisions for disabled Americans come to mind.

Does this mean that we are witnessing a globalization of disability advocacy tactics fostered by technological change? Not necessarily. Online advocacy strategies, what work and what doesn't, but also what is acceptable and what isn't, are born out of a mix of factors in which technology is only one element. While cultural, historical, and political differences also play a role, it is sometimes the policy context, and more specifically the policy agenda of the day, that can precipitate certain uses of social media by advocacy networks. This was the case for the groups involved in opposing the UK welfare reform. It is when people feel threatened that they are most likely to share their anger and frustration through digital communications. Thus, events will continue to shape the future of digital disability advocacy in ways that, at least in part, are excitingly unpredictable. Future work in this area ought to include the perspective of disabled Internet users, now a majority among disabled people in both the UK and the U.S.

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Pre-exposure prophylaxis in the UK: Identity, stigma and activism

Rusi Jaspal, De Montfort University

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which is the cause of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), remains a major public health concern some 35 years after its first clinical observations. In the UK, men who have sex with men (MSM) are disproportionately affected by HIV. According to the Public Health England HIV Situation Report in 2015, approximately 43% of the 103700 individuals living with HIV in the UK are MSM, while 57% of the 5850 new HIV diagnoses (through sexual exposure) were within this demographic group. In London, it is estimated that 1 in 11 MSM is living with HIV. These epidemiological data suggest that existing HIV prevention methods, such as condom use, have not been entirely effective and that novel approaches are needed in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

This has led to discussions about the feasibility of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), which is a novel bio-medical approach for preventing HIV infection. The drug Truvada® (which consists of two nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors, emtricitabine and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate) is currently used as PrEP in the US and was used in clinical trials in the UK. PrEP works by blocking a key enzyme that enables

HIV to replicate once it has entered a human CD4 t-lymphocyte. As HIV is unable to replicate, infection cannot occur. Various clinical trials in several populations suggest that PrEP is highly effective. Data from the UK PROUD study, for instance, indicated an 86% reduction in HIV infection among individuals in the experimental group taking Truvada. Truvada as PrEP can be taken either on a daily basis or "on-demand" (that is, before and after a possible exposure) in order to prevent HIV infection.

While PrEP has been available in the US since 2012, there is only limited access to PrEP in the UK. Following the promising data yielded in the UK PROUD study, NHS England began an economics evaluation in order to explore the cost effectiveness of offering the prevention tool on the National Health Service (NHS). In March 2016, NHS England decided not to commission PrEP, arguing that commissioning HIV prevention services is the responsibility of local authorities. In response to this decision, supporters of PrEP launched a petition calling for PrEP to be made available on the NHS. On the basis of robust scientific data, PrEP activists argue that the provision of PrEP would prevent thousands of new HIV infections among MSM, that is, it would reduce HIV incidence. Furthermore, despite concerns about the cost of funding PrEP, HIV prevention using PrEP is significantly less costly than life-long HIV treatment using ART. In view of these arguments and growing activism in favour of making PrEP available on the NHS, it is possible that NHS England will once again consider offering PrEP on the NHS.

Credit: incidence0.org

As PrEP is currently unavailable on the NHS, it can only be obtained

privately. The only sexual health clinic to provide access to PrEP is 56 Dean St (an NHS sexual health clinic located in Soho), which offers Truvada privately at a cost of £400 per month. As an alternative to Truvada, many MSM have been purchasing Tenvir-EM (a generic version of emtricitabine and tenofovir) online at a cost of approximately £45 per month. However, concerns have been raised about the authenticity (and, thus, effectiveness) of PrEP purchased online, as well as the wellbeing of patients whose condition (i.e. liver function) may not be consistently monitored by health care professionals. Indeed, this is concerning given that ART, such as emtricitabine and tenofovir, can cause serious side effects. In response to these concerns, several clinics in London, such as 56 Dean St and Mortimer Market Centre, now offer free PrEP clinics to monitor the condition of individuals who are purchasing PrEP privately. However, given the high cost of PrEP, uptake has been rather low and it is likely that many of those individuals most vulnerable to HIV infection do not have access to the prevention tool. Incidentally, in one US study, sexual risk-taking was associated with economic hardship, which suggests that those at highest risk may be financially unable to access PrEP. As an alternative to purchasing PrEP, there are also reports of "clinic hopping" which refers to the practice of visiting several sexual health clinics and falsely claiming to have been at risk of HIV in order to obtain post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). As PEP usually consists of Truvada and a protease inhibitor or integrase inhibitor, the "clinic hopper" retains Truvada which can then be used as PrEP. The prevalence of this practice is not currently known but, as this constitutes a clandestine means of obtaining PrEP, the clinic hopper may not feel able to access the PrEP clinic.

In order to understand the underpinnings of activism around PrEP, it seems important to explore the social representations (that is, the images and constructions) of PrEP that have been emerging in the public domain. As the print media constitute a major source of societal information concerning science and medicine, we conducted an analysis of all of the articles published in UK national and regional newspaper outlets. This yielded a modest corpus of 57 articles, of which most were published in *The Independent* (20), *The Guardian* (13) and *The Daily Mail* (9). We

explored the tone of media reporting, and the major themes, tropes and metaphor drawn upon to describe PrEP. Overall, we identified two competing social representations of PrEP – the *hope representation*, on the one hand, and the *risk representation*, on the other. In creating the hope representation, metaphors of momentous change such as "revolutionary", "silver bullet", "the key" and "making history" were employed in relation to PrEP. These articles not only emphasised the positive characteristics of PrEP as an HIV prevention method, they also implicitly positioned it as being superior to existing methods, such as condom use and treatment as prevention (TasP). TasP refers to the virological suppression of the HIV-infected individual which reduces the likelihood of onward transmission. Furthermore, war metaphors such as "battle", "fight", "weapon" and "besieged" served to position PrEP as decisively changing the course of HIV prevention. Conversely, HIV was positioned as being weakened by PrEP. This pattern of media reporting tended not to acknowledge the potential shortcomings or limitations of PrEP, such as issues concerning toxicity, drug adherence and exposure to drug resistant strains of HIV. Conversely, the risk representation accentuated the risks and uncertainties associated with using PrEP and positioned the prevention tool as a hazard. This representation generally questioned the effectiveness of PrEP both in terms of the science of PrEP and the sexual attitudes and behaviours of gay and bisexual men which might serve to reduce the effectiveness of PrEP in this population. There was a clear element of social stigma in relation to gay sexuality and to the sexual practices said to be associated with this identity, which is echoed in a recent paper on "whore shaming" published in the *Journal of Homosexuality*. In short, sexual risk-taking and condom fatigue among gay and bisexual men were cited as key reasons why PrEP should be regarded as a risky HIV prevention method.

While the analysis suggested that the press appeared either to accentuate social stigma in relation to PrEP or to create unrealistic expectation vis-à-vis its effectiveness in eradicating HIV, the impact on public understanding was unclear, particularly among MSM, a group that is particularly likely to benefit the most from PrEP. Thus, in a separate study which is currently under review, I interviewed an ethnically diverse

sample of 20 HIV-negative and HIV-positive MSM to explore their perceptions and understandings of PrEP as well as their beliefs about how PrEP could impact their own lives and behaviours if it were to become available in the UK. HIV-negative MSM appeared to manifest uncertainty and fear in relation to PrEP as they believed that it would not be completely effective and that it would leave them feeling uncertain due to the "invisibility" of PrEP once it is taken (versus a condom which can be examined physically to ensure that it has remained intact during sex). Conversely, HIV-positive MSM were generally of the view that PrEP would reduce uncertainty and fear (primarily of onward transmission of HIV to HIV-negative partners). Similarly, there was a stark difference in how HIV-negative and HIV-positive MSM perceived the potential impact of PrEP on their interpersonal relations. While HIV-negative MSM felt that their use of PrEP could induce social stigma, HIV-positive MSM foresaw an improvement in relations with serodiscordant partners who they believed might feel less anxious about sex given the advent of PrEP. Although both cohorts acknowledged the possible benefits of PrEP, they nonetheless manifested stigma vis-à-vis the prevention tool, which led some HIV-negative MSM to reject PrEP for personal use.

It is clear that social stigma underpins attitudes towards PrEP both at social and individual levels. The prevalence of social stigma appears to have infiltrated thinking at an individual level, which has led individuals who may benefit from PrEP to reject it as an HIV prevention tool that people "at high risk" might utilise. This enables individuals to deflect from themselves the social stigma associated with PrEP. In response to social stigma and political inertia, social activism around PrEP has begun to emerge and it has taken shape in a number of ways. In general, activists have sought to educate others about PrEP in a bid to decrease stigma and, thus, to facilitate discussion.

As HIV campaigner Sadiq Ali indicated in his moving account of living with HIV, he was given the opportunity to take PrEP as part of the PROUD clinical trial but decided not to do so, because of the associated social stigma. A few weeks later, he contracted HIV. London-based writer, journalist and influential HIV equality campaigner, Greg Owen

describes a similar experience in relation to PrEP, which in part has led him to become a vocal advocate of the prevention tool, engaging in PrEP advocacy on a number of public platforms. His frank and candid accounts of gay sexuality and sexual risk-taking have contributed to breaking down the silence surrounding these very sensitive issues in public discourse. Indeed, Greg Owen's activism around PrEP has attracted considerable support among the HIV medical community. Greg Owen also co-founded the "I Want PrEP Now" website which seeks to provide "the information you need to understand and start taking PrEP in one place". Crucially, on the website individuals are informd about how to obtain PrEP online and how to access services vital to their wellbeing while on PrEP. PrEPster, another awareness-raising group formed "to educate and agitate for PrEP access in England and beyond", has similarly been campaigning for PrEP to become available on the NHS. The US-based Facebook group "PrEP Facts: Rethinking HIV Prevention and Sex" was founded by US psychotherapist Damon Jacobs in order "to support discussions, debates, questions, and concerns that promote fact-based information, understanding, respect, and compassion." The group now has over 14000 subscribers from all over the world, a paid editorial staff team, and consistent and lively discussion around the topic of PrEP. On the Facebook page, current PrEP users share their experiences of using PrEP and respond to others' queries about it.

It is important to note that these awareness-raising pressure groups have developed in online spaces, such as Twitter and Facebook, providing the perfect context in which to engage the public on the pressing issue of HIV prevention and, more specifically, on the role that PrEP might play in preventing HIV. This has facilitated collaborative work between US- and UK-based activists advocating for PrEP. The key challenges that PrEP activism engages with are social stigma and decreased public understanding of PrEP, both of which can inhibit public support for PrEP and ultimately lead to increased HIV incidence. Moreover, PrEP activists view social stigma and low awareness of PrEP as obstacles to making PrEP available on the NHS. The media have a key role to play in promoting a fair and balanced view of PrEP which is the ideal starting-point for a discussion about how PrEP ought to be implemented in

the UK. They at least *inform* the views and perceptions that individuals develop in relation to PrEP – stigma appears to be a key underlying theme. Stigma and silence will lead only to more HIV infections. PrEP activism must continue to decrease stigma and to facilitate dialogue.

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Four tips on using Instagram to study the emotions of parenthood

Linnea Hanell, Stockholm University

Becoming a parent is life-changing. And in addition to being a physically challenging experience, it is also a deeply emotional one. Parents may feel love, joy and happiness, but also anxiety about their new responsibilities. For new mothers the first few weeks can be a time when they find themselves feeling moody and tearful, sometimes referred to as the 'baby blues.' At this important moment, sharing one's feelings and experiences can be helpful. Instagram has become a site on which recent parents can share how they cope with the various challenges they face. It also offers researchers to study the variety of discursive practices that they engage with.

Credit: Jonathan Nalder/Flickr/CC BY-NC
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In a study on health discourse in the everyday life of a new parent, I used Instagram as one of the many ways of keeping in touch with my informant 'Veronica.' In particular, Instagram enabled me to keep track of what was happening in my informant's life between the meetings that we actually got together for about once a month. Veronica was quite active on Instagram, posting 340 pictures during the six months of our working together, so her postings became an important data source for me, being, as I was, interested in her engagement in various forms of health communication. I discovered, however, that Instagram can be a difficult site for conducting this kind of ethnographic, long-term fieldwork, as it required a great deal of time and effort on my part before producing any great insights. Therefore, I would like to share some of the difficulties I had with the site and offer recommendations for overcoming them. By doing so I hope to save future researchers' time and energy that could be better spent on their actual analysis.

There are different ways of accessing and recording Instagram activity, and none of them seem to be optimal for ethnographic work. There is, in short, the Instagram app, and then various online URL feeds. The app is probably the most common way to access Instagram, and it might be seen as the most authentic instantiation of Instagram activity. Thus, if you

want to use visual representations of your data, you might want to present it to your audience as it appears in the app. However, the Instagram feed is continuously filled with new postings, and it is not possible to skip back in time in the app; rather, you have to scroll through all postings in reverse chronological order. This can be a problem if you are following a very active user, as I was. Veronica has posted more than 2,000 pictures since we finished working together, which means that I have to scroll for around fifteen minutes to get to the time frame I am interested in seeing. This is obviously not something one wants to do any more often than is necessary. Hence my first tip:

- **Do screenshots of postings that seem most important in the app.**

Following this rule, you will not need to do screenshots of everything that happens; stick to what you might want to use as examples when you present the study later on.

To review what was going on during the actual period, consider my second tip:

- **Use gramfeed.com to skip back in time.**

Unlike many other online Instagram feeds, this website will allow you to skip back in time and look at only the postings made during a particular period. However, the layout is completely different from the Instagram app, so I have avoided using it for visual representations of my data (therefore, take heed of tip no. 1).

You might be interested in the comments section in addition to the actual postings of your informant. If so, note that if a person deletes their account, the comments they have written will disappear as well. Thus, my third tip is:

- **Save the comments to important posts.**

This can be done through screenshots in the app, which, again, is good if you want to demonstrate the interaction visually as it appeared on

Instagram. However, since only a small share of the comments will fit on one screen, you may have to do numerous screenshots to cover them all. In that case, it's more practical to access the posting with an online feed, and copy and paste the comments from there. Besides gramfeed.com, Instagram has its own web application: instagram.com. However, if you want to get an ultra-authentic representation of the interaction, you might be bothered by the fact that neither gramfeed.com nor instagram.com can show emojis the way they appear in the app.

Therefore, my fourth and final tip:

- **Use iconosquare.com to access the comments section interaction with emojis intact.**

To conclude, I strongly recommend using Instagram to complement other ethnographic work (or use as the exclusive field site, although I have never tried this myself). For me, it has proven to be a useful way to keep in touch with my informant and get to know her without being too intrusive, as well as to take a peek into the everyday conversations she engages in. I am confident that this tool will be even more useful and rewarding for researchers who consider these four tips as they venture into the field.

Linnea Hanell is interested in sociolinguistic and linguistic-anthropological aspects of knowledge and health. She is currently finishing up her PhD project, which focuses on processes whereby discourse enters into actions concerning health aspects of parenthood. This project comprises a study about a new mother (reported on here), as well as one about an online discussion forum thread for pregnant women, and one about midwives giving preparatory lectures to expecting parents. She can be found on Twitter as @linneahanell.

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Social media and health: A source of 'patient voices' or 'business insight'?

Daniel Hunt, University of Nottingham and Nelya Koteyko, Queen Mary, University of London

For many, smartphones and other web-enabled technologies have become ubiquitous, mediating activities from shopping to travel, from banking to romancing. From health apps to patient forums, the experience of being unwell has been similarly transformed. Social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook and Twitter now host burgeoning networks for individuals with chronic conditions. The size and reach of these networks means they have the potential to influence health behaviours on a grand and disruptive scale.

The NHS has historically been slow to integrate new web technologies into routine care services. So while we use social media to communicate with friends, colleagues, companies, and politicians, healthcare professionals have typically remained beyond patients' reach.

Recently, however, government and professional policies have begun to address social media and their implications for healthcare. There are good

reasons for doing so: SNSs multiply opportunities for communication between professionals, policy makers, patients, and the wider public. They can enable the government to gather feedback from service users and publicise health information, foster professional networks and patient communities, and facilitate online consultations.

Inevitably, policy and NHS activity have focused on some of these opportunities more than others. Policy papers from the Department of Health and NHS England have embedded plans for social media within a digital information strategy focused on publishing data on NHS services, increasing patient choice, and gathering business–relevant "insight." Social media have been positioned as a way to facilitate consumer choice, helping to shift healthcare towards consumer models serving not just patients but also "clients," "customers" and a supposed "social networking generation."

As members of the latter, we are said to uniformly demand greater knowledge of service options so we can make better choices. While the permeation of such consumerist thinking into healthcare policy predates the Web 2.0 era, social media have nevertheless been configured as a new vehicle for delivering consumerist policies based around increased choice, "patient empowerment" and patient responsibility. To this end, rather than providing or commissioning online services, the Department of Health's *The Power of Information* paper commits to "stimulating a market" and creating "space to innovate" for non–NHS organisations.

Credit: Kevin Kruse/Flickr/CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

At the same time, the Department's publications have largely overlooked social media's potential to support therapeutic interactions between healthcare providers and service users. In some ways, this should be surprising. While claiming to address the demands of the "social networking generation," recent policies neglect a significant reason why many individuals with chronic conditions already use SNSs —interacting with others with the same conditions through blogging, tweeting, reading, viewing, liking, sharing, and creating health-related content and using this to assist in their own self-care. Indeed, beyond a few papers by the NHS Confederation, the potential of social media to promote peer-support has remained a peripheral concern, despite examples of health professionalsand organisations already using sites to support patients.

In other ways, the government's caution around social media is less surprising; determining how to pay for digital healthcare is complicated and remote consultations can be fraught with practical difficulties. Similarly, concerns around patient confidentiality are magnified by the corporate ownership of social media sites. For policy makers, managing these risks means limiting the government's use of dynamic, flexible platforms to the less precarious tasks of disseminating information and sourcing patient feedback while letting the market meet remaining demand.

Yet, falling behind public and patient trends is also risky. Multiple competing sources of information that do not carry the credentials of a site like NHS Choices could create uncertainty over whose information to trust. By promoting third-sector and commercial social media organisations as providers of online services, policy is also encouraging the public into a digital health economy in which the users' online contributions are routinely commodified and exploited for commercial ends. This can include generating research data and refining consumer-driven advertising for third party products but may also involve the sale of user-generated information to other businesses.

By retreating from providing care through social media, the government both misses opportunities and devolves risks onto the public and non-

government organisations. Crucially, without a change in policy and working practices to reflect how the public use new media, our healthcare professionals will remain out of the loop with emerging patient practices.

This post was originally published on BMJ blogs.

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Epigenetics, hype and harm

*Brigitte Nerlich, University of Nottingham*

I first became interested in epigenetics around 2010/2011. I know this because I trawled my emails and found a link that I had sent myself on 11 February 2011 to an article in *Mother Jones* entitled "The illustrated guide to epigenetics". The first paragraph of this guide is rather prophetic: "This month marks the ten-year anniversary of the sequencing of the human genome, that noble achievement underpinning the less noble sales of 23andMe's direct-to-consumer genetic tests. To commemorate the scientific occasion, we've created an illustrated introduction to *one subfield of genetics likely to produce even more dubious novelty science projects someday: epigenetics.*" (italics added) This is exactly what happened and what I'll reflect upon in this post. But what is epigenetics?

Epigenetics

Definitions of epigenetics are rather varied and contested, but I'll go with this one: "Epigenetics explores chemical tags on DNA that have the ability to turn genes on or off … What intrigues many people about the study of epigenetics is the idea that environmental aspects or an individual's lifestyle may influence these chemical tags and, therefore, impact how our genes express themselves … Perhaps even more intriguing is the discovery that certain epigenetic marks may be

maintained and passed on through generations, known as transgenerational epigenetic inheritance."
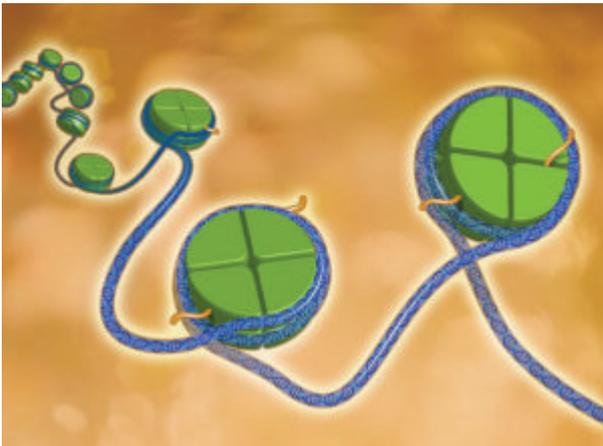
Credit: Darryl Leja/NHGRI/Flickr/CC BY 2.0

Speculations triggered by such intriguing discoveries led to disputes about what some saw as a 'crisis' in evolutionary theory, a return of Lamarckism and/or a return of eugenic thinking. On a more peaceful level, there were calls for closer collaborations between biologists and sociologists – a call eagerly taken up by sociologists keen to 'revitalise' sociology. And finally, as epigenetics seemed to turn the tables on so-called 'genetic determinism' and focused attention on the 'environment' (in whatever form), policy makers began to dream about a 'scientific' way of dealing with anything from health to poverty and to ask: "Can we use epigenetic information to understand and prevent human disease through environmental modifications (reducing exposures, dietary changes and medication use)?"

Epi-hype

Between 2010 and 2012 I began to read more and more about epigenetics in newspapers, academic articles, and on alternative health websites peddling what I began to call 'epi-woo' – others call it flapdoodle. But despite my doubts, I almost got sucked into an emerging cycle of natural and social science hype about epigenetic hopes and fears. In 2013 I wrote a slightly breathless blog post about epigenetics, but I fortunately ended on a cautious note and said: "We have learned many lessons about

how quickly scientific advances in, say, cloning, stem cell research or neuroscience can be overhyped (both positively and negatively, in terms of hopes and fears). While studying epigenetics from a social science perspective, we should try not to contribute to this emerging hype. While observing and watching over the emerging science, we should also pay attention to how its results are transformed (and perhaps over-interpreted) in various societal and political projects." (For a more detailed discussion of the "political implications of the emerging science of epigenetics in specific policy domains", read Shea Robison's forthcoming book on the topic.)

Hype monitoring

In the same year, 2013, Edith Heard, a Professor at the Collège de France, holding the Chair of Epigenetics and Cellular Memory, tried to reign in some of the emerging hype. In an article for The Guardian she is quoted as saying: "'Even our epigenetic changes are genetically driven. The code of genetics is the code. It's the only code.' But now with epigenetics, 'people are hoping we can pray our way out of faulty genes'…. 'It's our duty as scientists to pass on the right messages. I don't want to say epigenetics isn't exciting … [but] there's a gap between the fact and the fantasy. Now the facts are having to catch up'." This realistic view of epigenetics didn't quite stop the hype. In fact, by 2014 epigenetics was, according to Judith Shulevitz, "fast becoming the top topic in pop science", and, I would add, in pop social science and pop social policy.

Waves of natural and social science hype are still splashing onto the shores of Twitter now in 2016, sometimes broken by boulders declaring #epibollocks (andneurobollocks). It is actually quite heartening to see how blogs and tweets have become a normal part of peer review and are also used to monitor emerging hype. This became particularly apparent recently when bloggers and tweeters scrutinised a popular science article by Siddhartha Mukherjee about epigenetics written for the *New Yorker* (published 2 May) and then an article on epigenetics, depression and poverty published in *Molecular Psychiatry* on 24 May.

This doesn't mean that 'normal' academic articles don't contribute to this process of hype monitoring as well. An article published in 2015 for example is entitled "Neural and behavioral epigenetics; what it is, and what is hype" and says: "some of this research has also attracted controversy and … some overblown claims. This latter problem is partly linked to the shifting sands of what is defined as 'epigenetics'." Martyn Pickersgill, an expert in social studies of biomedicine, published an article in 2016 in which he studied efforts by natural scientists practicing epigenetics to engage in 'epistemic modesty' and to guard against 'epistemic ostentatiousness' and hype.

Hype and harm

So it is rather depressing to read comments like this on twitter over the last week or so: "a new exciting & real science obscured [by] tons of over-exposed and shoddy work", "I think we all should use restraint when discussing epigenetics", "epigenetics is a useful word if you don't know what's going on – if you do, you use something else", "for some, 'epigenetic mechanism' means fake correlation", "TOO MUCH #EPIBOLLOCKS, TOO LITTLE TIME, EVEN WHEN USING ALL UPPER CASE TEXT" and: "Great read on #epigenetics via @NautilusMag Epigenetics Has Become Dangerously Fashionable http://ow.ly/pvgj300hZBA". The article referred to in this tweet tries to fathom why social scientists in particular have become so 'enamoured' with epigenetics and contribute to feeding the hype that most epigeneticists try to get away from. As Matthew Cobb points out in his book *Life's Greatest Secret*: "Epigenetics remains fascinating, but it is an adjunct to our understanding of the complexities of gene regulation and the origins of plasticity, not a radical new model of inheritance and evolution."

It is rather worrying to see how hype has begun to devalue the concept of 'epigenetics'. This might harm the real and fascinating study of gene regulation and related topics, as well as the public understanding of and public engagement with these topics.

I close with a cartoon displayed within a blog post by Caroline Relton for the OUPblog on epigenetics and epidemiology, which sort of sums up the current situation:

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Fat activism in the news

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'Fat acceptance' meaning self-acceptance and body positivity regardless of one's weight and 'fat activism' referring to the diverse activities in which individuals engage to create livable lives both for themselves and for others are certainly not new concepts. Fat activism has been traced back to the 1960s and 70s when the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance (NAAFA) was established and The Fat Liberation Manifesto was published. My own exposure to the concepts and the encompassing activities is, however, recent and happened while analysing the news reporting on 'obesity' in Britain and Germany – two geographies that have been understudied, according to my literature searches at the time.

Credit: Lauren Gurrieri/Stocky Bodies

When we talk about 'obesity' we define fatness as a contributor to chronic diseases such as cancer and diabetes or a chronic disease in its own right. Thus, obesity is a problem in need of a solution. As a media and communication researcher, I wanted to know what solutions are highlighted in the media and, more generally, 1) how obesity is problematised in mainstream online newspapers which reach large audiences and 2) how readers react to such coverage. While I identified different frames or representations of obesity, most news articles problematized weight and focused on the negative impact of obesity on physical health, national healthcare systems and the wider economy. Individuals labelled 'too fat to work' were presented as a drain on scarce resources. So while we may think of weight as an apolitical issue, it also does not escape the attention how such representations may resonate especially well with notions of good citizenship in neoliberal societies, where individuals' main goal is seen as being able to lead an economically productive life. Obese individuals were also portrayed as a cause of melting ice-caps and desertification, thus drawing a not unfamiliar link between weight and global warming.

What struck me though was the admittedly much smaller number of news articles that challenged this status of weight as a key determinant of good health and did not problematize weight per se, but rather society's preoccupation with weight. These news articles explicitly referred to fat activism, traced the origins and described the aims of the fat acceptance movement and gave voice to individuals identifying themselves with the movement. This was interesting because media and communication research and social movement research has shown how difficult it is for social movements to gain mainstream news representation, as they normally fall outside of journalistic beats. Further, even when social movements gain news attention, the coverage tends to be highly dismissive. The fact that this was not the case here seemed to be a sign of success for fat activism.

But readers' reception of news articles describing fat acceptance and fat activism was ambivalent. Some of those news articles were closed for comments from the outset, others contained brief notes to indicate that

comments had been deleted by the moderators, which suggests that their tone did not allow for publication. It is perhaps not too difficult to imagine what the deleted content may have involved, especially if we think of recent instances of 'fat shaming'. Where readers' comments were allowed and available, readers reacted with a lot of emotion – some spoke about feeling disturbed or outraged by the propositions of fat activists, while others were outraged by the former reactions.

All in all, these findings demonstrate that apart from sustaining perceptions of obesity or weight as a problem in need of a solution, mainstream news media can also expose readers to ideas that challenge deeply ingrained conceptions about the meaning of weight. The fact that fat acceptance voices were included in the coverage can also be interpreted as success for the fat acceptance movement. But, as readers' mixed reactions demonstrate so well, the debate on obesity and weight is far from settled. Time has, of course, elapsed since 2011 which was the cut off point for my analysis, the media is paying more attention to fat activism and fat acceptance and these representations should be revisited to update our understanding of where the weight debate is heading.

Dimitrinka Atanasova is a health and science communication researcher (substantive areas include obesity, mental health and climate change). She applies theories and methods from media and communication, linguistics and sociology. Before starting her doctoral research which examined the framing of obesity in online news she was a Media Analyst/Consultant. She is Secretary and Deputy Convenor of the British Association for Applied Linguistics Health and Science Communication Special Interest Group and a member of the Health Humanities Network and the Navigating Knowledge Landscapes Network. Visit her on Twitter at @dbatanasova.