

Networked Cosmopolitans

Making connections in a world of politics

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Abstract

It has become a commonplace that the internet has created a global village. Yet in recent years, democracies have seen increased nationalism, populism, division, and a desire to protect and close borders to the outside world. How do we reconcile these trends with understandings of the internet as a cosmopolitan space? This dissertation takes an empirical approach to online communication, using a combination of Big Data gathered from Twitter and qualitative interviews with users in the Scandinavian region. This article-based dissertation is composed of four articles that use a combination of network analysis, quantitative content analysis, and qualitative thematic analysis, to understand the dynamics of cosmopolitan communication on digital, networked platforms. The findings demonstrate that cosmopolitan communication cannot be separated from national citizenship, and in fact is widely practiced by those with anti-cosmopolitan tendencies. Engagement with the Other have become a normal part of modern political engagement. The dissertation proposes an ideologically neutral “networked cosmopolitanism” as a model for political engagement in global, digital spaces.

Sammendrag

Det har blitt vanlig at internett har skapt en global landsby. Likevel har demokratier de siste årene sett økt nasjonalisme, populisme, splittelse og et ønske om å beskytte og stenge grenser for omverdenen. Hvordan forener vi disse trendene med forståelser av internett som et kosmopolitisk rom? Denne avhandlingen tar en empirisk tilnærming til nettkommunikasjon, ved å bruke en kombinasjon av Big Data samlet inn fra Twitter og kvalitative intervjuer med brukere i den skandinaviske regionen. Denne artikkelbaserte avhandlingen er satt sammen av fire artikler som bruker en kombinasjon av nettverksanalyse, kvantitativ innholdsanalyse og kvalitativ tematisk analyse, for å forstå dynamikken i kosmopolitisk kommunikasjon på digitale, nettverksbaserte plattformer. Funnene viser at kosmopolitisk kommunikasjon ikke kan skilles fra nasjonalt statsborgerskap, og faktisk praktiseres mye av de med anti-kosmopolitiske tendenser. Engasjement med Den Andre har blitt en normal del av moderne politisk engasjement. Avhandlingen foreslår en ideologisk nøytral «nettverksbasert kosmopolitisme» som modell for politisk engasjement i globale, digitale rom.

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List of Articles

1. Robinson, J. Y. (2022). Fungible citizenship: On the internet no-one knows you're a swede. *Media/Culture Journal*, 25(2). <https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.2883>
 2. Robinson, J. Y. (2022, May 28). *Monitorial–cosmopolitans, networked–locals: The case of Scandinavian Twitter engagement with the 2020 US election*. Presented at the 72nd Annual ICA Conference, Paris, France. [Manuscript in process of submitting for publication.]
 3. Robinson, J. Y., & Enli, G. (2022). #MakeSwedenGreatAgain: Media events as politics in the deterritorialised nationalism debate. *Nordic Journal of Media Studies*, 4(1), 56-80. <https://doi.org/doi:10.2478/njms-2022-0004>
 4. Robinson, J. Y. (2022). George Floyd and cosmopolitan memory formation in online networks: A report from northern Europe. *Mediterranean Journal of Communication*, 13(2), 185-199. <https://doi.org/10.14198/medcom.21834>
- [Spanish version] Robinson, J. Y. (2022). George Floyd y la formación transnacional de memoria democrática en redes sociales: Un informe desde el norte de europa. *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación*, 13(2), 15. <https://doi.org/10.14198/medcom.21834>

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Introduction

This dissertation is about cosmopolitan communication in the digital age. It asks what it means that people now have the capacity for personal and political communication on platforms that are not geographically bound. Through a study of empirical material from Twitter, I argue that we need updated models of how people connect with that wider world that considers global politics outside its official structures. I propose that we consider the role of *networked cosmopolitans*. These people may not be “cosmopolitan” in the traditional sense. They may be firmly embedded in their national milieux. They may not even take politics very seriously. But they demonstrate the way politics from both far and near have become intertwined in constant, consumable, shareable ways in online networked spaces.

A theory gone out of fashion

At the turn of the 21st century, a shift was on the horizon. Scholars and philosophers suggested that with the end of the Cold War, the rise of globalization, and the growth of the World Wide Web, democratic discourse would become more globalized, that moral commitments to other people would be based on shared humanity rather than shared nationality. The international relations scholar Andrew Linklater (2002) described the potential for an era characterized by “dispositions and practices which can be harnessed to transform political community and the global order” (p. 330). The journalism scholar Stephen Reese (2011) described the hope for a kind of globalized media system that “may support a more

cosmopolitan ‘global village’” and “mitigate against conflicts based on nationalistic urges” (p. 79).

Such hopes sound out of sync with the current times. Brexit, Trump, Bolsonaro, Modi: the successes of these figures and movements seem to refute the universalistic moral futures floated by scholars two decades ago. *The return of the national* is what characterizes the current climate, writes media scholar Terry Flew (2020). “It is not apparent,” he writes, “that global mobility equates with the adoption of cosmopolitan identities, or with the disappearance of nationalism” (p. 29). Rather than the growth of “world citizens,” many countries in Europe, the Americas, and parts of Asia have seen a triumph of nationalist–populist politics, whose political communication is characterized by “anti-globalization rhetoric about unaccountable cosmopolitan elites” (Flew, 2020, p. 49).

And yet. We can also see on our screens that the world feels more present than ever. Movements like #MeToo, #JeSuisCharlie, #BLM, the K-pop fans that ruined a Trump campaign rally – political movements and ideas from afar are seemingly a normal part of our digital experiences. Moreover, these political expressions include “anti-globalization rhetoric about unaccountable cosmopolitan elites,” like #MAGA, #WWG1WGA, #PEGIDA, and #TruckersForFreedom – these sentiments are at odds by all accounts with the ideals as laid out by cosmopolitan scholars, but they too “transcend national political life” (Sassen, 2002, p. 287). How do we square these global flows of politics with the apparent failure of media to bring the world together?

This dissertation investigates this conundrum through an empirical study of cross-border communication in digital media. Based on the findings of these studies, I argue that cosmopolitan theory is not an outmoded way of understanding the world but more critical than ever, especially when it comes to politics. In conversation with the work of Ulf Hannerz and John Urry, who have written about the individual’s relationship to the world, and building on Ulrich Beck’s theory of cosmopolitanization, the dissertation seeks to add new layers to cosmopolitan theory through the concept of “networked cosmopolitans.” This concept is proposed as a way of describing the relationship that digital media can foster with notions of the Other, often in ways that do not fit the formal structures of global politics, nor cosmopolitan morality. The dissertation also contributes to the fields of political communication and social media, as cosmopolitan communication has implications for how citizens obtain information about politics, the political issues they engage with, and the narratives of the world they identify with.

Methodologically, the dissertation answers previous calls for empirical–analytical approaches to cosmopolitan theory (Beck, 2006, 2011; Delanty, 2006; Skey, 2012; 2013) through a four-year, mixed-methods research project that combines quantitative Big Data and qualitative interview data collected on Twitter users in the Scandinavian region. This represents an effort to understand a phenomenon in its most ideal setting, in line with Christensen and Jansson’s (2015) interviews with immigrants and expats and Hannerz’s (2007) study on foreign correspondents. Hannerz proposed these actors provide a window into “the prototype of the life of the cosmopolitan” (as quoted in Rantenen, 2007, p. 22). In other words, if we’re going to try to understand the potential of digital media for cosmopolitan communication, we might as well start in a place cosmopolitanism is likely to be found.

Politically engaged Twitter users from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark likewise are a kind of ideal, coming from highly connected, multi-lingual, and wealthy countries in the Global North. While they might not on the whole be representative of all people, nor all Twitter users, their position as prototype cosmopolitans make them particularly valuable for making visible the most ideal version of processes and characteristics associated with new conceptions of cosmopolitanism. Even so, Twitter users are not a homogenous group, and I make efforts particularly with the qualitative interviews to reflect the diversity of actors on Twitter.

Specifically, I am interested in communication that either engages with events in other countries or engages with people in other countries (Norris and Inglehart, 2009). These forms of communication are identified using newly available digital data and analysis methods for communication research. I position this investigation of cosmopolitan communication against the rising use of digital media, and specifically digital network platforms. By this I mean the online spaces that allow people to create their own content, and to view and respond to the content from other users – third-party sites that allow for what Castells has called many-to-many, “mass self-communication” (2008, p. 90). Platforms that we also know as social media and social networking sites (for a discussion of terminology see Marres, 2017, p. 45). I present these platforms as affording fundamentally new forms of communication and network formation by allowing direct, mediated contact between users (Bechmann & Lomborg, 2012, p. 767). Moreover, digital platforms are generally speaking not restricted by the usual constraints of geographic distance. Tweeting at a Brazilian from a screen in Norway is technically no different than tweeting at a fellow Norwegian.

Four empirical studies on Twitter and cosmopolitan communication are presented in this dissertation. Two (article 2 and 3) draw on huge datasets of tweets collected from Twitter’s API during major political events; language and geolocating techniques are then used to identify

users and identify cross-border interactions and transnational networks. In addition, data-driven qualitative interviews were conducted with 26 Twitter users who appear in the data collections; these provide additional phenomenological insight into the Big Data (articles 1 and 4).

The dissertation follows the format of what is known as an “article-based dissertation,” meaning that the four studies are free-standing academic papers, which appear at the end of the document. The findings from these studies are pulled together thematically and theoretically in a seven-chapter “Kappa,” as it’s known in Norwegian, in which this is the first chapter. Subsequent chapters of the Kappa cover previous research and theory, the data and methods used, and finally present a higher-level synthesis and discussion of the articles’ findings, the contributions of the body of work, as well as the limitations.

Before further discussion of the research, however, I wish to position this project in relation to media theory, and preview my central argument.

The search for the global village

The capacity to communicate across geographic boundaries is one of the central promises of the digital age. Yet it is worth remembering that the cross-border flow of political ideas itself is not new. Many of the major ideas that have shaped modern democracies formed with inspiration from abroad, including democracy itself. Movements including slavery abolition, women’s rights, labor, temperance, anarchism, and the inter-war peace movement were composed of local, national, and international organizations, almost all before the arrival of broadcast media (Chadwick, 2006, p. 124). In 1916, the activist and social worker Jane Addams noted the emergence of an “international mind,” meaning an awareness of a global whole (as quoted in Joslin, 2004, p. 176). With the arrival of electronic media, Marshall McLuhan envisioned the return to the kind of instant, oral communication that was common before print, only this time worldwide in scope, creating a kind of interconnected “global village” (McLuhan, 1987 [1964]).

McLuhan’s global village demonstrates the urge in media scholarship to understand how new technologies might change how people come together in collectivities, whether villages, communities, or networks. There is a tendency, as with McLuhan, to compare these new collectivities to previous versions. Perhaps for this reason, arguably one of the most cited texts in the area of global communication and cosmopolitan theory is a book about nationalism. Benedict Anderson’s (1983) concept of the “imagined community” has been especially influential on theories of how a global village or community might form. Anderson argued that

nations are composed of strangers who imagine that they share distinct space, time, and language, fostered primarily through media. This notion of mediated community provided a roadmap in much of the literature on globalization for how imagined communities could also form at global levels. “[The] nation-building process parallels what is happening through globalization at the turn of the twenty-first century,” wrote Levy and Szneider (2002, p. 90), who proposed that collective memory exists not only at a national level, but also the global level, exemplified by the global sense of responsibility for the Holocaust. “Cosmopolitan memories” are held by humanity as a whole. Urry, meanwhile, suggests that in the same way maps, flags, and other visual images helped nations of strangers imagine themselves as a community (see Anderson, 1983, p. 174), emblems like the Olympic Flag and the image of the earth from space “reflect and perform a global imagined community” (Urry, 2003, p. 81). Other scholars suggest that global imagined communities can be the foundation for political action at a transnational level (Beck, 2011; Linklater, 1998).

Though much of this thinking is aimed at the macro-level, within these stands of literature, some attention has also been paid to the individual’s experience of global connection with the world. In a 2002 paper called *Cultures of Cosmopolitanism*, Szerszynski and Urry provided a methodological and theoretical approach for thinking about the phenomenology of globalization through media. Drawing on interviews with British focus groups, the scholars suggested that people “conceive of wider, dispersed communities based not on geography but on shared interests or ‘affect,’ organised around practices and issues” (p. 474). The everydayness of their subjects’ experience with and conceptions of “the world” led Szerszynski and Urry to argue that media had helped bring about a form of cosmopolitanism – a “globalization in the head” (p. 464) – for individuals, which could lay the groundwork for an “ethics of care” in global society (p. 478). The paper largely focused on television, but suggested that with the proliferation of computers and mobile phones, “this global vernacular will be increasingly folded into a wide array of other practices” (p. 477).

Szerszynski and Urry were prescient in their description of media organizing people around shared interests and “affect,” and media that “blur what is private and what is public, what is front-stage and what is back-stage,” (p. 478). Such descriptions have been used to describe platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. Zizi Papacharissi, for example, has described the blending of public and private in online platforms (2010) and the notion of networks built around shared affect (2015) on Twitter, while Bennett and Segerberg (2013) suggest that people are connected online through personalized acts of sharing about their own interests. Moreover, new conceptions like “hybridity” in media systems (Chadwick,

2017) and produsage (Bruns, 2008), as well as the methodological ability to render networks visible through users' sharing activities (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 126) would appear to complement nicely the strand of cosmopolitan literature focusing on individuals and interconnection (Cicchelli & Mesure, 2001, p. 7).

Yet perhaps because of the association of cosmopolitanism with a normative belief in universal rights and global responsibility, the post-Cold War interest in cosmopolitan communication has waned. As Cicchelli and Mesure (2020) note, this is the era of fragmentation and division, nationalism and xenophobia – themes that make writing about cosmopolitan theory and cosmopolitan communication, “alien to the spirit of the times” (p. 2). This is unfortunate because, as I argue in this dissertation, the digital era has made understanding cosmopolitan communication more relevant than ever.

In making this case, I pick up a thread laid down by Beck (2006) in particular, who makes the case in his theory of cosmopolitanization that social scientists should distinguish between cosmopolitan practices (such as cross-border communication) and cosmopolitan attitudes. Because the world has become so prevalent in many people's lives, he argued there has been a general “cosmopolitanization of reality” and he argues that “there is no necessary relation” between feeling a moral unity with the world and engaging with it (p. 74; see also Norris & Inglehart, 2009). As an example, Beck describes meeting a Danish traveler who was well-versed in different cultures and enjoyed meeting people in other countries, who even described himself as a “global citizen.” But he was very much opposed to increasing foreign immigration to Denmark (p. 4). Beck argues that this contradiction of orientations needed more investigation.

Yet there has been surprisingly little application of the empirical–analytical cosmopolitanism described by Beck and others to social media research, at least with regard to political communication. Rather, digital platforms are often treated as national spaces in studies of elections, policy discussions, and movements (e.g. Ausserhofer & Maireder; Barbera & Rivero, 2015; McKelvey et al., 2014). Or, alternatively, they are presumptively global spaces in which “we can communicate instantly with everyone almost everywhere in the world” (Navarria, 2019, p. 2). Interestingly, one of the fields that has taken cross-border political communication most seriously is in the area of cyber warfare and propaganda (e.g. Brattberg & Maurer, 2018; Colliver et al., 2019; Golovchenko et al., 2020). Yet this leaves out the vast majority of accounts on digital social platforms that are run by ordinary people, with the same affordances as foreign troll farm. Likewise, scholars of cosmopolitan theory have not engaged much with the empirical opportunities of social media Big Data. It is telling that in one of the

few recent volumes on cosmopolitanism, *Cosmopolitanism in Hard Times* (Cicchelli & Measure, 2020), across 400 pages from 29 contributors, there are four references to “social media,” one reference to Facebook (none to Twitter), and 10 uses of the word “digital.” In other words, we know that digital platforms have transformed national public spheres, but their use for personalized political communication on a global level is still undertheorized. This leaves open the question: What does it mean for social media users to be able to communicate instantly with everyone almost everywhere in the world? – and what does this mean for cosmopolitanism?

Twitter: Studying a personal and political communication medium

Many of the online movements mentioned previously – #MeToo, #BLM, #FreedomConvoy, #MAGA – either started or at least became widely known through Twitter. While Twitter encompasses a wide variety of topics, its use for political discussions has become especially well known Burgess and Baym (2020, p. 15). In the American context, the platform, launched in 2006, has been called the “the core assignment editor of the entire journalism industry” (Klein, 2019, 19:55). The use of Twitter by reporters, politicians, organizations, commentators, CEOs, and academics has helped make what is a niche platform in terms of users into a major cultural force and a part of the civic infrastructure (Burgess & Baym, 2020).

Here is a quick illustration of Twitter’s outsized influence. Figure 1 shows the relative frequency of mentions of various social media platforms in Norwegian newspapers from 2005 to 2020, based on the Norwegian National

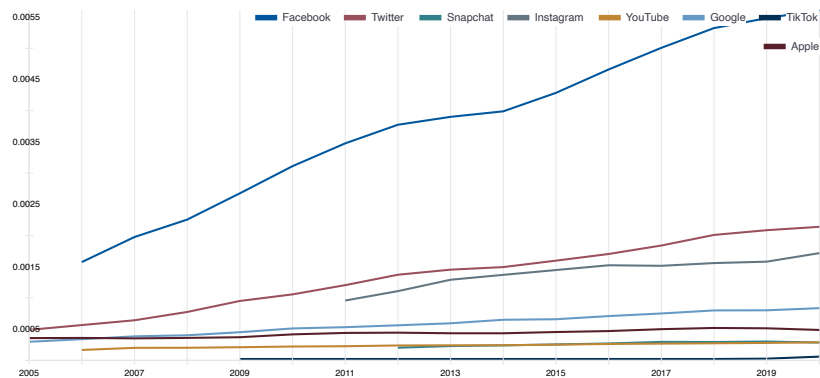


Figure 1. Relative frequency of social media platforms appearing in the Norwegian press, 2005-2020. Source: Språkbanken

Library’s digital archives (Språkbanken, 2022). The graph traces the rise of Facebook most of course; eight out of 10 Norwegian adults have a Facebook page (Ipsos, 2020). Yet we see that Twitter received the next highest share of references, even though its userbase is lower than many other platforms. (According to Ipsos Norge, 64% had a Snapchat account, 60% an Instagram account, and 29% a LinkedIn account at the end of 2020, compared with 27% on Twitter.)

Although dominated by the U.S., Twitter is also highly global (Burgess & Baym, 2020; Leetaru et al. (2012), and lends itself to what scholars have called a “cosmopolitan space” (Kyriakidou et al., 2018). In contrast to Facebook, Twitter networks are based on followee–follower relationships, which do not require reciprocity. This allows for much more engagement between users who are otherwise strangers and has facilitated much more geographically diverse networks than other social media platforms (Ghemawat, 2016).

Though Twitter hosts numerous language communities, English has been found to be the most commonly used lingua franca in transnational networks on the platform (Hännska & Bauchowitz, 2019; Mocanu et al., 2013). In a random scrape of tweets, I found that 67% of the tweets sent by users in Scandinavian countries were in English. (See Figure 2.) Some of these were retweets; others were original content or news articles. Users weren’t always consistent in their use of language; sometimes they tweeted in English and sometimes in their national language. This gave the impression of interactions between a national and a cosmopolitan sphere, similar to that described in cosmopolitan theory. But this raised questions for me about the intention behind these patterns – the audiences the users were imagining, the forms interactions took, and how users made sense of foreign events. This data helped lay the groundwork for this dissertation and the research questions described in Chapter 2.

Twitter lends itself to cosmopolitan communication, due to the ease of interaction, but it also exhibits many of the negative associations with cosmopolitanism. Namely, it tends to be

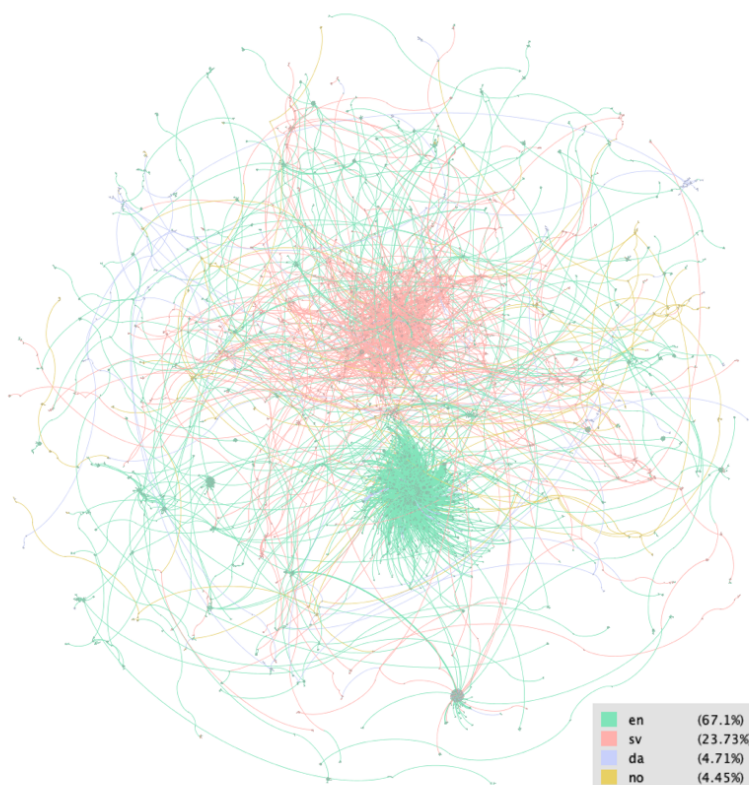


Figure 2.
Language of tweets in Scandinavian Twitter networks.

Data collected May 2017. Nodes = 9519; Edges = 11679. Created in Gephi using the ForceAtlas 2 algorithm.

an elite platform, populated with users who do not represent the general population. “Twitter use appears to be an emerging channel for transmission of elite influence,” writes Blank (2017, p. 691), but he cautions that “Twitter users are not representative of any population other than themselves” (p. 694). Blank’s analysis of surveys from the U.S. and the U.K. indicate Twitter users are disproportionately men, and are wealthier and more highly educated than the general population.

Moreover, information flows on Twitter follow a “rich-get-richer” pattern (Hindman, 2009), in which a few elite actors attract most of the attention – and often these are the same actors that already get attention offline (Larsson & Moe, 2014). Twitter is also not globally available due to bans in some countries, nor is it available in all languages. Finally, Twitter is a for-profit company that employs algorithms to provide content that users will engage with, meaning that both corporate and algorithmic decision-making also shape networks on the platform. More discussion about Twitter’s functionalities and corporate policies, its use in Scandinavian countries, and the limitations of any so-called “global” digital platform will come in later chapters.

Some key terms and staking out the field

Before continuing, a few definitions, beginning with *cosmopolitan communication*. Norris and Inglehart (2009) define cosmopolitan communication as “the way that we learn about, and interact with, people and places beyond the borders of our nation-state” (p. 9). While certain standards related to the normative quality of communication could be applied, in this dissertation I define cosmopolitan communication as communication that is directed beyond the borders of the nation-state. In other words, it is interchangeable with cross-border communication. In the case of Twitter, this can be measured both through interactive features (@mentions, retweets) or by use of non-national languages (especially English).

Other studies have used the term transnational communication in similar ways (e.g. Hänska & Bauchowitz, 2019; Rauchfleisch et al., 2020). However, in my reading of the literature, transnational communication more often implies a certain degree of intention and coordination (e.g. transnational social movements, transnational corporations) or more macro-level phenomena (e.g. transnational public spheres). As I describe here, literature on cosmopolitanism focuses on the more ambient, banal, and phenomenological understanding of cross-border communication. Cicchelli and Mesure (2020) argue: “a cosmopolitan approach makes it possible to document, on a daily basis, the paradoxical nature of the impact of globalization on the individual experience in contemporary societies” (pp. 7–8). Even so, this

dissertation also draws on literature on transnationalism communication, publics, and movements.

Another term related to this dissertation is “globalization.” As a period in time, this generally refers to the post-World War II period in which countries have become more economically, technologically, and governmentally interconnected. The term more often however refers to a set of processes that scholars argue have changed social relations in the world. As Held et al. (2000) define it, globalization “embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions, generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction and power” (p. 15). In media studies, the globalization of information and communication is of particular interest, and these are fields that I also draw on.

Finally, this dissertation specifically examines political communication. Political communication I understand as covering broad range of forms of public expressions aimed at negotiations of power and governance (Badie et al., 2011). In social media research, the term is often applied based less on the nature of the communication and more on the political nature of the topic used to collect data. In the context of this dissertation, I look specifically at political communication about events: elections, the COVID pandemic, and the Black Lives Matter movement, all of which revolve around questions of power and the role of government. In line with other literature on online communication, the terms “political engagement” is also used to refer to general expressions of interest, including reading and sharing news stories, while “interaction” more specifically refers to communication directed at a specific user (Kalsnes et al., 2017).

I will also note that the articles have been published in journals aimed at different audiences, and speak to different lines of literature, demonstrating the relevance of cosmopolitan communication to a variety of other fields. Because of these different approaches, however, different terms are at times used for the same concepts. In particular, the articles at times use the terms “citizens” and “users” as well as “audiences” and “networks” depending on the theoretical tradition.

Structure of the ‘Kappa’

The chapters that follow will connect the articles in this dissertation, both to each other and to wider academic discussions about digital media, cosmopolitanism, and politics. In Chapter 2 I lay out the research questions and how they connect to the articles. This is followed by a discussion of the theoretical framework and an analysis of the status of the research field

in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, I describe the particular cultural and political context for this research, looking at the Scandinavian region and its media systems, including Twitter use in the region. Chapter 5 describes the data and methodological approach, including a roadmap of the data collection process and a reflection on ethical considerations raised by this research. In Chapter 6, I present a summary of the articles and their main findings. These are elaborated upon in the concluding discussion in Chapter 7, in which the concept of networked cosmopolitanism is proposed. I also discuss the limitations of the project and possible avenues for future work. Additional research materials, including the interview guide, content analysis codebooks, and links to SQL scripts, appear in the Appendix that follows the four articles themselves.

Chapter 2

Research Questions & Introduction of the Articles

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate *how we can understand cosmopolitan communication in an age of global digital networks*. This overall inquiry is broken down into a series of subquestions that address different components of cosmopolitan communication, and which I answer through four empirical studies on Twitter users in the Scandinavian region.

As described in Chapter 1, these themes, via Anderson (1983), have been used previously in the literature on globalization and cosmopolitanism to make sense of changes in communication technology (e.g. Beck, 2006; Robertson, 2010; Szerszynski & Urry, 2002; Tomlinson, 1999). Beginning with shared space, I suggest that digital platforms create a novel opportunity for individuals. Previously, talking politics with strangers in other countries required physical travel. International communication was more the realm of media organizations, governments, and NGOs. Now, however, people regularly occupy spaces where

geography is largely interchangeable or “fungible.” This condition of shared space is explored in the first question:

RQ₁: How do citizens understand Twitter as a global space?

This question is mainly answered in Article 1, which uses qualitative data from interviews with Scandinavian Twitter users. It probes the literature on the relationship of global media to citizenship, critiquing world citizen and cosmopolitan citizenship models. This article also sets the stage for the event-specific articles that follow.

Second, I investigate the role of global (or *globalized*) events in cosmopolitan communication, asking:

RQ₂: How do events shape cosmopolitan communication on Twitter?

This is answered through Articles 2, 3, and 4. These articles, respectively, look at the 2020 U.S. presidential election, the 2018 Swedish election, and the death of George Floyd in May of 2020. These events afford opportunities to examine how Twitter networks respond to global spectacles (Trump’s re-election campaign) as well as the way that ostensibly national events are “deterritorialized” and made to be global (Tomlinson, 1999). Drawing on Levy and Sznajder’s (2002) theory of cosmopolitan memory, Article 4, examines the way a foreign event – the death of George Floyd – is negotiated into a cosmopolitan memory in real-time on Twitter.

Third, I seek to identify how people navigate spatio-temporal platforms, asking:

RQ₃: How does language relate to cosmopolitan communication on Twitter?

This question is most directly answered in Article 2, which takes up the local–cosmopolitan dichotomy in a digital context, reframing it as a spectrum. Looking at the way Scandinavian users engaged with 2020 U.S. presidential race, the article investigates the way language allows bilingual Scandinavians to move between national and global contexts. However, I also consider language in a more metaphorical sense, as the creation of shared meaning and symbols, which is explored in Article 3 and Article 4. (These are identified as RQ3-a and RQ3-b; see Table 1.)

Finally, all four of the articles contribute to the fourth question on shared values, which asks:

RQ₄: What is the relationship between political ideology and cosmopolitan communication?

This question comes from the tradition in cosmopolitan theory to associate cosmopolitan communication with cosmopolitan moral worldview. This question is answered in various ways by each of the articles.

Table 1 lists the articles, the empirical material, and the research questions they answer. Articles 1, 2, and 4 have been published in international journals. Article 2 was presented at the International Communication Association conference and will be submitted to an international journal for publication.

Table 1. Articles in the dissertation

Article	Themes	Title	Empirical material + method	Questions answered
1	Shared space; Shared values	Fungible Citizenship: On the Internet No-One Knows You're a Swede	User interviews + qualitative thematic analysis	RQ1, RQ4
2	Shared language, shared time; Shared values	Monitorial–Cosmopolitans, Networked–Locals: The case of Scandinavian Twitter engagement with the 2020 US election	Twitter big data from the 2020 U.S. election + quantitative content and network analysis	RQ3-a, RQ4
3	Shared time; Shared values	#MakeSwedenGreatAgain: Media events as politics in the deterritorialised nationalism debate	Twitter big data from the e2018 Swedish election + quantitative content and network analysis	RQ2, RQ3-b, RQ4
4	Shared time; Shared values	George Floyd and cosmopolitan memory formation in online networks: A report from Northern Europe	user interviews & Twitter profile data + qualitative thematic analysis	RQ2, RQ3-a, RQ4

Conceptualizing cosmopolitan communication

The ability to communicate beyond the level of face-to-face interaction is now deeply embedded in the human experience. What is different about the present conditions of communication as they exist on digital network platforms is that geography – potentially – plays a much *less* important role than previously. In contrast to print, broadcast, and even satellite, the technology that supports online communication is much less tethered to particular locations or societies.

Such capabilities raise new questions about cosmopolitanism, the theoretical perspective that has been the main contender in the last decades for conceptualizing why and how people

communicate and form community beyond their nation-states. This chapter investigates different views of cosmopolitanism and how it relates to communication, focusing on conceptions that focus on the individual and their practices of engagement with the world. In particular, I draw on the work of Robert K. Merton, Ulf Hannerz, John Urry, and Ulrich Beck. The chapter also connects to related fields, including global media (Hafez, 2007; Held, 2003; Robertson, 2010), transnational activist movements (Crack, 2008; Castells, 2015; Papacharissi, 2015), identity and citizenship (Couldry & Hepp, 2017; Linklater, 2002; Delanty, 2002), and global/transnational public spheres (Fraser, 2007; Volkmer, 2014) – fields that also address communication that crosses national borders.

The first part of the chapter reviews the literature in a structure that roughly follows the themes of my research questions: shared space, shared language, shared time, and shared values. Following this, I discuss some of the gaps in the current literature in relation to the current digital media context. In the final part of the chapter I discuss the particular digital platform studied in this dissertation, Twitter, and the extant empirical work related to cosmopolitan communication on it.

I. Cosmopolitanism: A brief history

“Cosmopolitan” as a term predates mass media by about two millennia. The Greek Cynic philosopher Diogenes allegedly coined the word when he described himself as a *kosmopolites* or “citizen of the world,” according to his ancient biographers. Diogenes was likely being a provocateur, the Athenian “cross between Woody Allen and Old Dirty Bastard” writes Zuckerman [2013, p. 21]). To be a cosmopolite was probably an expression of *non*-attachment as opposed to an attachment to a humanity beyond the Greek city-state system (Long, 2008). However, the term has survived as an expression of globality, an antidote to provincialism and nationalism, and a sense of universal connection between humans. Cosmopolitan theory has contributed to the formation of international bodies like the United Nations, to the preservation of sites of shared memories through UNESCO, to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the European Union (Saito, 2020). It has been influential in international relations, urban planning, education, sociology, and media studies. “Cosmopolitan” has at times been compliment and epithet.

While Diogenes may have come up with the term, it was the German philosopher Immanuel Kant that helped develop cosmopolitan theory as we know it today (Cicchelli & Mesure, 2020). In his essay *Perpetual Peace*, Kant grappled with Enlightenment ideals of rights as inherent, and the emergence of nations as sovereign entities entitled to extend rights

to some people and not others (Kant, 1917 [1795]). Kant recognized a tension that continues to this day when he wrote:

[Interconnection] between the nations of the earth, has now extended so enormously that a violation of right in one part of the world is felt all over it. Hence the idea of a cosmopolitan right is no fantastical, high-flown notion of right, but a complement of the unwritten code of law ... necessary for the public rights of mankind in general and thus for the realisation of perpetual peace. (1917 [1795], p. 142)

In my reading, the essay does not provide a solution for individuals who find their rights violated, but Kant suggests that on a macro level at least, peace would be achieved through a “universal community” (p. 142) of nations, aided by “the commercial spirit” if not by moral resolution (p. 157).

In the modern context, cosmopolitan theory has been posed as globalization’s moral conscious. Maria Kyriakidou (2009), who studied cosmopolitan reception of foreign media coverage, writes that “new approaches to the old concept of cosmopolitanism are attempting to theorise how social life has been transformed in the context of complex global interconnections and interdependencies” (p. 480). David Held (2003) argued that in political institutions, a national outlook is no longer sufficient to navigate the world, but rather, a “cosmopolitan outlook” is required to deal with the “political challenges of a more global era, marked by overlapping communities of fate” (p. 469). Cosmopolitanism is especially closely tied to human rights and migration. Theorists such as Saskia Sassen (2002) and Martha Nussbaum (1994) have applied cosmopolitan theory to the institution of citizenship itself, making arguments for formalized post-national and denationalized rights (in the case of Sassen), or altered norms of national citizenship (in the case of Nussbaum).

Media and communication play a critical role in much of this literature (Kyriakidou, 2009). The availability of satellite TV, global news channels, the international markets in entertainment, and (particularly relevant here) the internet are seen as critical elements of bringing the world to people and establishing cross-border connections (Robertson, 2010). In addition to a focus on structural forms of cosmopolitanism, scholars have also drawn attention to the *individual’s* new role as a cosmopolitan driver in society – what Kurasawa (2004) called “cosmopolitanism from below.” The individual’s own communication choices are central to this view. In fact, one of the foundational texts on what it means to be a cosmopolitan is closely related to media use (Merton, 1949 [1968]). This more phenomenological approach to cosmopolitanism is arguably even important in the context of digital media, which make identity, culture, and politics even more individualized (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Bennett,

2012). It is this connection between individuals, communication, and cosmopolitanism that I explore in the sections the follow.

The cosmopolitan individual

Although the Greek origins of the concept of cosmopolitanism were in reference to a person, it is only more recently that extensive scholarship has been devoted to the idea of cosmopolitan people. The term cosmopolitan experienced a revival in the 19th century amid industrialization and urbanization, when it came to imply a well-traveled sophisticate, someone who feels comfortable in different cultures and countries, and likely speaks multiple languages. This is the image *The Cosmopolitan*, as it was then called, capitalized on when the magazine was first published in 1886 (Figure 3).

However, the term was also used in derogatory ways. In 1913, the Oxford English Dictionary defined a *cosmopolitan*, or a *cosmopolite*, as “a ‘citizen of the world’; one who regards or treats the whole world as his country; one who has no national attachments or prejudices” (OED, 1913, p. 1032; see Figure 4).

The OED entry notes that the term has been contrasted to *patriot*, in both a complimentary or reproachful sense. It is worth remembering that the reproachful version was weaponized to raise suspicions and prejudices against Jewish citizens in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. The term “rootless cosmopolitan” referred to their disconnection from and disloyalty to the rest of the culture (Hannerz, 2004, p. 21).

The concept entered the sociological literature as a concept positioned against the “local” in the mid-20th century. Sociologist Carle Zimmerman (1938), inspired by Tönnies’ *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* of the late 1800s, proposed a *localistic/cosmopolitan* dichotomy to capture the changing orientation of American rural communities in the early 20th century.



Figure 3. *Cosmopolitan* magazine, November 1917.
Source: Wikimedia Commons

1. A ‘citizen of the world’; one who regards or treats the whole world as his country; one who has no national attachments or prejudices.

Figure 4. Oxford English Dictionary, 1913. Source: Internet Archive.

This concept was solidified in the literature by Robert K. Merton (1949 [1968]), who developed the local–cosmopolitan division and shifted the focus from communities to individuals. In Merton’s study of opinion leaders in the town of “Rovere” New Jersey, the local and the cosmopolitan had different understandings of their position in relation to the world. *Locals* were more attuned to their immediate community, while *cosmopolitans* focused on matters outside the town. Merton explains that a question about the effect of the war on Rovere would elicit from locals “a response dealing exclusively with problems within the town,” while cosmopolitans would respond with “remarks about the national economy or international trade (1949 [1968], p. 446). Merton argued such people helped provide “a transmission-belt for the diffusion of ‘culture’ from the outside world” (p. 461).

However, Merton’s cosmopolitan was the person whose “world” was the wider nation, not necessarily the wider globe. In 1990, the anthropologist Ulf Hannerz published an essay, *Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture*, which updated Merton’s local–cosmopolitan dichotomy, but extends it to what he sees as the emergence of a world culture, by which he means a culture that is not tied to any particular locality, but an amalgamation best identifiable as global. Hannerz also highlighted that to be a cosmopolitan was not just a matter of satisfying curiosity about the world, but also to embrace something outside your immediate knowledge, to accept a level of discomfort: to be a cosmopolitan, he wrote, is to have “a willingness to engage with the Other” (p. 239). He argued that a paradox of cosmopolitanism was that cosmopolitans depend on locals – for whom local culture is taken for granted – to maintain the cultural diversity of the world that cosmopolitans appreciate (pp. 249–250).

While cultural consumption and traveling to foreign places is a part of what it means to be a cosmopolitan, cosmopolitans are not mere connoisseurs. There has been an effort to move away from the 19th century connotations of the cosmopolitan as the American going on the “Grand Tour” of Europe, or Victorian adventurers (Appiah, 2007, p. 8). Chauvier (2020) writes that the Kantian vision of global interconnectedness was very much embedded in European colonial expansion, and “the ‘citizen of the world,’ in Kant’s examples, is characterized by the European colonizer” (p. 48). Likewise, cosmopolitans in modern times have also been distinguished from tourists. While cosmopolitanism emphasizes a genuine interest in understanding, appreciating, and engaging with diverse cultures from a perspective of moral responsibility, the “tourist gaze,” as described by John Urry (1992), is primarily focused on the consumption and commodification of cultural experiences as a form of leisure and entertainment. Cosmopolitan scholarship has sought to de-elitify the concept, and increasingly other types of mobile groups. Kwame Anthony Appiah points out that migration also breaks

down boundaries and traditional identities: “The well-traveled polyglot ... is as likely to be found in a shantytown as at the Sorbonne” (2007, p. xviii).

Scholars have also sought to problematize the local–cosmopolitan binary, arguing these are complementary aspects of an individual’s identity (Appiah, 2007; Roudometof, 2005). Szerszynski and Urry (2002) write that cosmopolitanism should not be constructed “at the expense of the local” (p. 469). Rather, they see cosmopolitanism as a set of skills and predispositions, including mobility and capacity to interpret, a level of reflexivity about own’s own society and its place in the world, and a curiosity, openness, and willing to take risks in the face of new cultures (p. 470). Thus, people can be local in their cultural and geographic roots, but cosmopolitan in their openness to other cultures and sense of moral obligation.

Cosmopolitan communication

Whether individuals *are* or behave *as* cosmopolitans, a critical element of the understanding of how cosmopolitanism relates to the individual is communication. For Merton, one of the key distinctions between locals and cosmopolitans was their media habits. While the local was mainly interested in the town paper and short news updates on the radio, cosmopolitans preferred *Time*, *National Geographic*, and other news magazines. Though travel has classically been an element of the cosmopolitan lifestyle, Szerszynski and Urry argue that cosmopolitan mobility can be both corporal, as well as virtual and imaginative (p. 470). Hannerz only briefly discusses media in his first essay, but his definition – a willingness to *engage* – encompasses forms of mediated communication as well (see also Hannerz, 2004). Skey (2013) also suggests that communication is a way of identifying moments of cosmopolitanism. Kant, in fact, also identified global communication as a critical condition for a cosmopolitan order, though in his case it was ships and camels, not cables and satellites.

But if Kant’s vision of cosmopolitan communication entailed face-to-face contact between people, facilitated through travel, cosmopolitan communication today can occur through media. The cosmopolitan may no longer be just a well-traveled polyglot, but can also be an avid reader. In the following sections, I examine the scholarship on mediated cosmopolitan communication, as well as more general “engagement,” organized around the concepts of shared space, shared language, shared time, and shared values.

II. Key themes of cosmopolitan communication

Media as the creation of shared space

Jürgen Habermas in his collection of essays, *Inclusion of the Other*, expresses skepticism that cosmopolitanism could truly exist in Kant's time, given the limitations of communication technology to keep people in contact with each other. He argues that Kant's vision only now is "becoming apparent" in the form of a global public sphere (1998, p. 176). Indeed, as communication has gone from physically transported written materials, to wire-transmitted and then wave-transmitted multimedia, scholars have suggested that something akin to a "global public sphere" is in formation, in which politics – disseminating information, mobilization, and the contestation of power – moves "beyond national horizons" (Cottle, 2011, p. 21; Volkmer, 2014).

The technologies underpinning these global public spheres have enabled individuals to access the world in new ways. In his first essay on cosmopolitanism, Hannerz (1990) suggested that cosmopolitans may be increasingly experiencing the Other not through face-to-face encounters, but through foreign films, books, and other cultural artefacts. He goes so far as to argue that, "What McLuhan once described as the implosive power of the media may now make just about everybody a little more cosmopolitan" (p. 249). Though Hannerz later pulled back on the idea that media might "make" everybody cosmopolitan (see Hannerz, 2006, pp. 18–19), the point highlights the importance of media in facilitating contact with other parts of the world. Moreover, contact with the Other becomes less of an elite affair (pp. 17–18).

The concept of "cosmopolitan spaces" captures the idea of locations that facilitate interactions between diverse cultural groups, enabling individuals to engage with and understand each other across national and cultural boundaries (Bielsa, 2016; Kyriakidou et al., 2018). These spaces are often constituted by media. Kyriakidou et al. (2018) for example suggest that the Eurovision Song Contest, a transnational broadcast event, creates a cosmopolitan space that fosters openness towards cultural differences, in which national identification takes on a playful character, "expressed and performed mostly for the purpose of celebrating diversity" (p. 614). Notably, national differences for these scholars does not preclude cosmopolitanism. However, such cosmopolitan spaces are not without friction. Christen and Jansson (2015), who use the term "Other spaces," write that the capacity to observe and engage with the Other may often coincide with the exercise of power and the ability to simultaneously create boundaries (p. 1487). Thus, cosmopolitan spaces, as facilitated

by media, present opportunities for engagement with diversity, while also revealing complexities and power dynamics inherent in these interactions.

Szerszynski and Urry (2002) sought to understand individuals' experience of how television constitutes a global space in their paper *Cultures of Cosmopolitanism*. The paper builds on the work of Anderson's imagined communities and Habermas's public sphere, both of which imply that who people interact with and the media they consume form the basis of collective public spaces in modern societies. Szerszynski and Urry argued these processes also occur on a global level; the scholars argue that media had helped bring about a form of "banal globalism" – itself a riff on Michael Billig's (2010 [1995]) "banal nationalism." Like the national version, Szerszynski and Urry argued that everyday interactions with mediated symbols of a global whole – maps, pictures from space, the flag of the Red Cross – helps create a sense of global belonging (see also Beck, 2006; Hannerz, 2006; Skey, 2013 on a similar use of "banal cosmopolitanism.")

"Banality" does not necessarily imply "empty" in this context, however. Even seemingly ordinary encounters with globality can inspire cosmopolitan reflexivity, as Octobre (2020) argues. She proposes that Japanese manga, Korean K-Pop, and Nordic crime dramas offer an entry point to not just a particular aesthetic but a whole national milieu. Even when the cultural origins of a cultural product are hybrid in nature, "The process of *mise en genre* is accompanied by the identification of what is near and far, a kind of compass to orient oneself in a highly culturalized and aestheticized world" (p. 283). Thus, she argues that even "banal" engagements with the Other can contribute to the way people orient themselves in the world.

Events as critical moments of shared temporality

Globally connected media industries rapidly convey both information about distant others, as well as offer the possibility of jointly witnessing events (Hepp & Couldry, 2010). Dayan and Katz' (1992) concept of media events, though originally envisioned with national audiences in mind, is useful here. Media events are large-scale, planned, and live broadcasted events that interrupt the regular flow of programming and have the power to draw massive audiences. Media events play a crucial role in cosmopolitan communication as they provide shared experiences for diverse global audiences. These events transcend national boundaries and cultural differences, fostering a sense of global community and shared identity. Hallin and Mancini (1992) offered an empirical example of this, suggesting that American–Soviet summits – that is, international media events directed at a universal "we" – produced "at least temporarily, a global sense of community" (p. 127). The researchers only lamented that the

televised events fell short of true “global dialogue” by not involving citizens more (p. 131). Other examples have been found in the Olympics (Roche, 2002), and the Eurovision (Kyriakidou et al., 2018), as well as crisis situations such as the Danish Cartoon Crisis (Eide et al., 2008) and the Charlie Hebdo killings (Sreberny, 2016).

As Robertson points out, media not only create spaces for shared experiences, but also shared memory creation. Levy and Sznajder (2006) introduced the concept of “cosmopolitan memory.” They argue that the experience of mass atrocities and human rights violations, such as the Holocaust, has led to the development of new forms of collective memory that transcend national boundaries. Cosmopolitan memories are characterized by universalization of events, so that the event is decoupled from the territorial community that experienced the trauma and the event resonates with broader, shared moral concerns (Saito, 2020).

Alexa Robertson (2010) explored how media outlets contribute to temporal dimensions of cosmopolitanism through an investigation of coverage of the 2004 D-Day Anniversary by broadcasters in the U.K., Sweden, and Sweden. This event was both a moment of live witnessing, as well as a documentation of how past events were remembered. While Robertson found that the broadcasters “domesticated” the anniversary – that is, interpreted the event through a national lens – they also contributed to a sense of “mediated cosmopolitanism.” She noted that in many of the broadcasts, “we” referred not to fellow British, Swedes, or Germans, but to region. “The ‘we’ who is being depicted ... has in many of these items become European, and the collective that now shares a fate is comprised of both good guys and former bad guys” (p. 134).

Language and shared understanding

The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein famously said, “The limits of my language means the limits of my world.” The importance of shared language, in terms of written and spoken languages, is central to cosmopolitan communication as it facilitates interaction, understanding, and cooperation among people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Language is not only the means of communication, but also of affinity (Anderson, 1983; Joppke, 2002) – the feeling of who is “like us” (Watkins, 1991, p. 170). In a 2017 study of 14 countries, Pew found that more than religion, place of birth, or traditions, speaking the national language was seen as the true marker of being American, Swedish, Canadian, or other nationality (Stokes, 2017). Yet at the same time, English has grown into the most common global language, with non-native speakers outnumbering native speakers by four to one (Myers, 2015; Statista, 2022).

(Mandarin Chinese has far more native speakers than English does, but it has overall fewer speakers worldwide.)

Interestingly, language is a less explored dimension of cosmopolitan communication. Beck (2016) briefly touches on language diversity as a quantifiable measure of cosmopolitanism in communities, but he does not deal with the importance of a lingua franca (p. 93). Hannerz, an anthropologist, has engaged more than others with the subject. At times he (2016) expresses ambivalence about the “hyperlanguage” status of English (p. 231), since it is largely driven by American cultural dominance. However, he also makes the case that language may be overstated as mode of communication and building a sense of “we”-ness (1996, pp. 20–21). Hannerz writes that media technologies, in the form of printed books and newspapers, may have given language a “head start over other symbolic modes in defining cultural boundaries” such as music or gesture (p. 21). Hannerz suggests that electronic media technologies are “increasingly able to deal with other symbolic modes,” and suggests that thanks to images and video, “we may wonder whether imagined communities are increasingly moving beyond words” (p. 21).

Shared language thus encompasses not only the understanding of common spoken and written languages such as English, French, Chinese, or Swedish but also the shared touchpoints and symbolic understandings that also allow for communication between people from diverse backgrounds. Cosmopolitan communication thus depends on and establishes shared cultural references and shared ideas through the creation of shared experiences and memories (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). Media plays a critical role in this process, as it provides “the *narrative resources* necessary for individuals to establish their worldview” (Oktubre, 2020, p. 278, emphasis added). By disseminating information, stories, and images, media helps create a common cultural fabric that forms the basis for cosmopolitan communication.

Szerszynski and Urry (2002) introduced the concept of a “global vernacular” (p. 477), which refers to a shared language that transcends national and cultural boundaries, enabling communication in a global context. This global vernacular facilitates understanding and connection, allowing people to engage in meaningful conversations that bridge cultural divides. Beck, drawing on the work of Szerszynski and Urry, emphasizes the importance of “semiotic skill” (p. 43) in cosmopolitan communication. This skill involves the ability to interpret images of various others, understand humor, and recognize other forms of cultural expression. This enables individuals to connect, engage in meaningful conversations, and develop a shared understanding of the world around them. Likewise, Appadurai (1996) points out that participatory exchange requires more than just understanding the words as well – it requires a

certain cultural fluency to understand that different words may be subject “to very different sets of contextual conventions” (p. 36).

Creation of shared values and concern for the Other

Up until now, I have left aside the more normative aspects of cosmopolitan communication, leaving them instead for a separate section on shared values. Admittedly, this has been a somewhat artificial omission because in much of the literature the idea of cosmopolitan communication and cosmopolitan ideology are intertwined, if not used interchangeably. However, I wanted to set the normative, and sometimes prescriptive, aspects of the literature on cosmopolitan communication apart from the more descriptive and practice-oriented dimensions. I now revisit some of this literature, focusing on the role of cosmopolitan communication in promoting shared values and fostering concern for the Other.

Roudometof (2005) writes that cosmopolitanism entails 1) a way of orienting oneself and engaging with the world (including through media); and 2) a moral and ethical standpoint (p. 116). These two are generally connected, though recent scholarship has shifted away from viewing engagement as mere *expressions* of pre-existing cosmopolitan values – the idea of media choices being indicative of a certain type of person (Merton, 1949 [1968]). Instead, scholars now emphasize cosmopolitan engagement and moral cosmopolitanism as a continual exchange that shapes, creates, and refines cosmopolitan thought (Beck, 2006; Hannerz, 2006; Szerszynski & Urry, 2006). This perspective highlights the importance of ongoing communication and interaction in nurturing and sustaining a more inclusive and empathetic global society.

To take Hannerz, for example: In his initial 1990 essay on the subject, he sought to identify the characteristics of a “true” cosmopolitan. Engagement with the Other was an *expression* of this curiosity and openness. In his follow-up essay (2006), Hannerz suggested that engagement with the Other is not always intentional. “The proliferation of media now combine to loosen people’s ties to particular limited spaces” he wrote (2006, p. 21) – banal cosmopolitanism, in other words. His revised definition reflects a process-oriented version of cosmopolitanism: to be cosmopolitan is “a matter of being, or becoming, at home in the world” (2006, p. 14). This also reflects that for many people, “mediated encounters with cultural alterity” (Octobre, 2020, p. 283) may not be a comfortable process. Yet these provide the “breeding ground for a new cosmopolitan humanism” (p. 285). Similarly, Levy and Sznajder (2006) write that the process of forming cosmopolitan memories engages individuals and societies in reflections on their own actions and responsibilities, creating an emotional impact that leads to a shared sense of empathy and compassion, fostering solidarity and connections

among people from diverse cultural backgrounds. In the context of cosmopolitan communication, cosmopolitan memories can serve as a common reference point for discussions about human rights, social justice, and shared ethical concerns.

Through thick and thin: Political cosmopolitanism

Many scholars see cosmopolitan engagement as a potential catalyst for political transformation. Linklater suggests that cosmopolitan dispositions and practices “can be harnessed to transform political community and the global order so that they conform with universalistic moral commitments” (p. 330). Hannerz (2006) proposed “two faces”: the cultural and the political. The addition of a political dimension was a response to what Hannerz saw as the fading of post-Cold War optimism. New wars, environmental change, nativism and xenophobia – these called for a “cosmopolitan agenda” (p. 10). Cultural appreciation and banal encounters with the world are not enough, Hannerz argued. Cosmopolitan political institutions and movements were needed to develop a “strong sense of civic and humanitarian responsibility transcending national borders” (p. 15). This “thick” cosmopolitanism would be not only aesthetic and intellectual but also pragmatic and instrumental (p. 26). Hannerz argued that nationalism has different forms, ranging from thin “banal” versions to thick “civic” versions, so, “Why should there be no thick cosmopolitanism?” (Hannerz, 2006, p. 13).

Beck (2011) further elaborated on thick and thin cosmopolitanisms, arguing that a thick cosmopolitanism – that is, one that goes beyond fleeting feelings of sympathy, pity, or regret for the suffering in other countries – would come about through necessity (p. 1352). Global risks, he argued, would make global political community a matter of national and personal self-interest. Similarly, Appiah (2007) identifies two strands of cosmopolitanism: 1) an interest in other cultures; and 2) an obligation to even those we don’t share formal ties with. Appiah notes it is quite possible to have the first without the second (p. 7). Delanty (2006), meanwhile, sets a higher bar for cosmopolitan obligation – where the weak version entails a general commitment to human dignity and multiculturalism, while the strong version is a moral universalism that rejects the prioritization of national ties (p. 28).

However, many scholars are cautious to note that these are not inevitable outcomes. Hannerz (2006) writes, “We cannot be quite sure that empathy and even activism are what necessarily follows from the experience, by way of the media, of other human beings suffering violence, hunger or disaster somewhere in the world” (p. 18). Robertson (2010) likewise concludes that mediated cosmopolitanism is “at once inevitable and an impossibility” (p. 149),

meaning that glimpses of the normative ideals of cosmopolitanism exist but the complete version cannot.

This picture has arguably become more complex as the means of cosmopolitan engagement have become digitized and proliferate across various platforms. In the next section, I discuss the case for considering individuals to have the capacity to communicate across borders.

III. The need for new understandings of cosmopolitanism communication in the age of digital networks

In their deep dive into digital culture, Couldry and Hepp (2017) argue that the nation as a source of identity has not been replaced, but is now one of many sources of “social imaginary,” generated through the flow of images, information, and ideas across borders (p. 177), opening up a wider spectrum of possibilities for community (p. 175). In contrast to earlier mediated communication, digital platforms provide spaces for direct interaction. Environments are characterized by what Bruns (2008) calls “produsage,” in which consumer/producers help shape the structures of information by adapting, remixing, sharing, and building their own networks. These sites have become key platforms for political communication, and identity formation. Moreover, communities don’t need to be imagined – they are visible through the traces of digital communication of members of networks. What they see, and who they see, are more results of individual choices (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; 2013) – as opposed to the choices of foreign correspondents or international editors.

Digital platforms have enabled the constant formation of and reformation of decentralized networks between individual platform users, based on follower/friend relationships and acts of communication and interaction. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) argue these online networks have changed the logics of collective political action. “Crowd-enabled networks,” as they describe them “are less deliberately constructed and even less bounded than organizationally enabled networks” (p. 89). These networks rely on “personalized paths to concerted action,” meaning politics become part of the self-expression and social sharing that digital platforms encourage (2012, p. 752). This is not to say that organizational and media infrastructures are not still important, as Hindman (2009) has argued. And indeed, much of the content shared on social networking sites comes from well-known media brands. Rather, as Volkmer (2014) argues, public discourse becomes an interplay between “networks of

centrality,” such as national media systems, and the “centrality of networks” formed on social media (pp 15-17).

Due to these personalized, yet networked, flows of communication, user–producers not only have dual roles, but operate in dual spaces (Bruns & Highfield, 2016; Volkmer, 2014). *Publics* are now understood as multiple, overlapping, and highly issue-dependent (Bruns and Burgess, 2011). Volkmer (2014) argues for seeing the global public sphere(s) as a matrix of mini-networks, in which issues like women’s rights, the environment, and immigration might be examples. In the same way that globalization and digital media contribute to cultural and artistic hybridization (Octobre, 2020, p. 280), it becomes more difficult to distinguish national publics from global publics. In the next section, I take a closer look at the idea of geographic hybridity online.

Geographic hybridity

Building on the line of thought that emphasizes a local–cosmopolitan duality, scholars argue that the transnational shows up in people’s practices within the national public sphere, as they connect political material from elsewhere to their local practices – and likewise, the national becomes incorporated into transnational connections: “The local blends readily with the global and all stops in between,” writes Dahlgren (2015, p. 1424). In contrast to definitions of the cosmopolitan as having “no national attachments,” much of the recent scholarship rejects the idea that individuals must shed local and national ties (Volkmer, 2010; Tomlinson, 1999; Kyriakidou, 2009). Tarrow’s (2005) concept of “rooted cosmopolitans” suggests that people integrate influences from elsewhere to their local practices and identities. In global public spheres, Volkmer (2010, p. 54) argues, “national political institutions are substantial elements of a transnational public.” Likewise, Kyriakidou writes (2009) “cosmopolitanism is often framed through the national” (p. 481). Essentially, this is a “yes, and” relationship in which local and national context provides an important stage for acting out cosmopolitan sentiment.

Social media platforms have become a critical space where users engage in a dynamic interplay between local and global events, leading to a process of universalizing the local and localizing the universal (Octobre, 2020, p. 281; Robertson, 1990, p. 19). Unlike “domestication,” in which news outlets adapt foreign news to suit their local audience’s preferences (Robertson, 2010), these concepts emphasize the active role that individuals play in reshaping and reframing global events to fit their own experiences and perspectives. Through “universalizing the local,” users amplify local events and issues to a broader, global audience, revealing common concerns or struggles that resonate with people worldwide. On the other

hand, “localizing the universal” involves taking global events or issues and connecting them to one’s own local context, emphasizing shared human experiences that transcend geographical and cultural boundaries. By engaging in these processes, social media users actively participate in constructing cosmopolitan communication, bridging gaps between the local and global, and fostering a sense of interconnectedness across diverse communities.

Much of the available research that empirically addresses transnational communication on social media comes out of social movement studies. The Arab Spring has been particularly prevalent in this regard. Papacharissi and Blasiola (2016) reviewing studies on the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, found that “external non-Arabic speaking observers became participants in the Twitter discussions when they chimed in or showed support” (p. 215). Howard et al. (2011) report that domestic political websites in the country took advantage of the web to attract attention from the outside world, to put pressure on their own regimes. Forms of cosmopolitan cooperation have also been identified by Crack (2008), who studied Greenpeace’s use of a cyberactivist network, as well as feminists’ use of online forums to discuss issues and make connections. In more recent years, we have seen national events turn into international issues as hashtags like #JeSuisCharlie, #BringBackOurGirls, and #BlackLivesMatter.

However, this line of research is highly oriented around the core adherents to a particular movement and worldview, and less on a broad swath of social media users. Moreover, such studies still tend to focus on the aggregate effect of social media and what it means for a global movement, rather than what the communicative practices mean for the cosmopolitan development of users involved (although there are exceptions like Herdağdelen et al., 2013, as will be discussed). Although some of these users would likely describe themselves as world citizens, I propose a user-oriented research perspective that can offer something new to this literature.

An individual-focused political cosmopolitanism

The current media landscape has significantly transformed the way individuals find political information, providing them with tools to bypass traditional media channels, directly interact with others, and be active agents in the circulation of political discourse (Papacharissi, 2015). This shift towards a more flexible scenario driven by personal choice and personal networks has implications for cosmopolitanism. Among those others in user-to-user networks are people in other countries. This is a profound shift from previous understandings of both mediated cosmopolitanism and political cosmopolitanism, as direct online engagement empowers individuals to participate in global conversations, connect across cultural

boundaries, and potentially challenge conventional political structures (Castells, 2008; Chouliaraki, 2012). “Narrative resources” from abroad are more readily available, both through easy access to media, and through direct communication with other individuals separated by geography but linked by political solidarity.

Indeed, the potential for both one-on-one and one-to-many interaction on social media platforms seems to resolve a lacuna many scholars have noted with regard to global communication. Hallin and Mancini (1992), for example, lamented the lack of possibility for ordinary people to participate in what they saw as an emerging global public sphere. Similarly, in theorists of cosmopolitan citizenship have often had to be content with participation happening at a remove. Linklater’s (2002) examples of cosmopolitan participation include NGOs and U.N. conferences. Contrast this with #OccupyWallStreet becoming a Twitter phenomenon, in which “individualized messages may be shared, propagated, and organically collated across networks” (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 70).

However, much of the existing literature on political cosmopolitanism – that is, cosmopolitanism as not only cultural consumption, but also an engagement with structures of power – tends to focus on institutions, organizations, diplomats, and other public elites, rather than on the role of individuals in shaping and driving political change. Delanty (2006) for example identifies moral and cultural forms of cosmopolitanism as connected to individuals, while political cosmopolitanism takes the pressure of the individual and places it on systems of governance (p. 29). Other times, political cosmopolitanism may imply a role for citizens, but is usually identified in terms of policy outcomes related to immigration, human rights, and the environment (Cicchelli, 2020, pp. 295–296; Robertson, 2010, pp. 4–5). Hannerz’s (2006) “cosmopolitics” is animated by cosmopolitan experiences, and he recognizes a “bottom-up” version that includes social movements, much of his discussion focuses global governance (pp. 9–10). Even in the case of cosmopolitan memory, scholars often focus on the role of filmmaking, monuments, and heritage institutions like UNESCO (Saito, 2020, p. 226).

This disconnect between new individual-oriented understandings of mediated political communication (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013) and political cosmopolitanism constitutes a gap in the literature that needs to be closed in order to understand the relevance of cosmopolitan theory to digital media. I suggest among the “banal, or quotidian, or vernacular, or low-intensity” versions of cosmopolitanism that Hannerz (2006, p. 27) recommends exploring, there may be an individual-focused political cosmopolitanism, in which global politics come together with individual experience and agency.



Figure 5. Global internet use (2020). Source: The World Bank Databank

Caveats and considerations for cosmopolitan communication

Before continuing, I would like to note some of the other strands of communication research in recent years that have, in effect, thrown some cold water on cosmopolitanism. First, despite instances of transnational participation, and considerable technological capacity to engage across borders, the evidence that citizens regularly take part in cosmopolitan communication falls short in many regards (Zuckerman, 2013). Second, learning about the world does not necessarily lead to caring about it. And finally, there is growing evidence that transnational communication is an area dominated by right-wing, anti-cosmopolitans. These may be reasons that, even as cosmopolitanism is implied in digital spaces, it has been somewhat under-explored in a direct sense in social media studies. In the following sections, I examine these challenges in more detail.

'Global platforms' are not global

Despite the potential for cosmopolitan communication in the digital age, persistent digital inequalities continue to limit access to communication technologies for many individuals worldwide (Hilbert, 2011; Norris, 2001). This can be the result of hard barriers – that is,

government censorship schemes that ban people from accessing certain content or websites. In addition, softer barriers, including socioeconomic status, geographic location, and education create digital divides (Van Dijk, 2005; Salemink et al., 2017). Inequalities can exacerbate existing differences internationally as well as within nations, as those people who lack digital access or skill are further marginalized and excluded from economic opportunities, decision-making processes, and even critical health information (Alam & Imran, 2015; Ramsetty & Adams, 2020). Twitter, for example, has been called the “global town square” yet Twitter users tend to be those who already have significant social capital (Ragnedda & Ruiu, 2017). In a study of Twitter users in the U.S. and the U.K., Blank (2017) finds they tend to be more educated, younger, wealthier, and more male than the general population. In Figure 5, we can see that there are significant discrepancies between internet use in North America, Northern Europe, and Australia, and parts of South America, Africa, Asia, and even parts of Europe. (This map shows overall use, however, and does not reflect problems of internet speed, home access, or government censorship.) Moreover, the fact that nearly 60 percent of web content is in English (W3techs, 2023) means that so-called global communication technologies are not, in fact, globally available or evenly distributed (Ragnedda & Muschert, 2017). Global differences in digital access, in other words, limits who has the ability to participate in cosmopolitan communication.

Even the digitally connected have limited cross-border communication

In an exhaustive empirical analysis, Ghemawat (2016) investigated four dimensions of globalization: the global flows of people, information, capital, and goods. In theory, information is much easier to transport than people, washing machines, and even money. And Ghemawat did find that information crossed borders more often. However, it traveled *shorter distances* than the other types of flows, often following familiar patterns of shared culture and language. “Regionalization,” Ghemawat argues, is a better description of what we think of as globalization.

People’s offline lives – personal, cultural, and economic ties, geographic proximity, and language – continue to shape the movement of information. In part, this is due to traditional media systems, which wield significant power, still being highly tied to nation-states (Hafez, 2007). However, as Zuckerman (2013) describes, it is also that people simply do not take full advantage of the “global” web, even when they have the opportunity. Zuckerman documents the decline in international news readership in the U.S. and argues that social media is more often a source of insulation from the outside world than a means to connect to it. Likewise,

Ugander et al. (2011) find about one out of five Facebook friendships cross national boundaries. Twitter tends to be more cross-national (Leetaru et al., 2013). Even so, Takhteyev, Gruzd and Wellman (2012), find that cross-national follower-connections tend to be between users in countries with the same dominant language – again, suggesting regionalization. With the rise of technology like GPS and geotagging, Eric Gordon and Adriana de Souza e Silva (2011) argue location has become a fundamental organizing principle of the web, rather than being rendered obsolete.

Christensen and Jansson's (2015) qualitative research on migrants and expats helps shed light on the insulating effects of ostensibly global platforms; they find that participants often use the web to access national media from home. In other words, the web helps to *counter* cosmopolitan interactions by building “regimes of enclosure” filled with the familiar (p. 1487). Such findings seem to back up the idea, as asserted by Skey (2013) and Hannerz (2006), that cosmopolitan communication – when it does occur – is situational: that is, it arises in relation “to specific needs, contexts or prompts, rather than being an inherent property” (Skey, 2013, p. 235; see also Hannerz, 2006 p. 7). And it is not certain that cosmopolitan communication will lead to a greater sense of moral obligation to other people. In the next section, I explore the recent research on how audiences interpret their mediated interactions with the Other.

On Interpretation

In her book, *Mediated Cosmopolitanism*, Alexa Robertson explores the way news helps put audiences in contact with faraway others. Although she focuses on television, the findings are also instructive for understanding audiences/users on digital platforms. Robertson finds that even the same events may be interpreted differently by national media. She notes that the community-forming effects of media do not happen through passive means; it requires the imagination of the audiences acting upon what they see, and turning these into narratives with meaning (p. 2).

Indeed, a central tenet of research on media, and particularly global media, is that even when people do watch identical content, they do not see it the same way (Katz & Liebes, 1990; Smith, 1990). They interpret, critique, and adapt it to their own perspectives. With foreign news especially, viewers often rely on heuristics – such as “good” and “evil” – to understand complex dynamics (Peffley & Hurwitz, 1992), which may result in merely “peering through the keyhole” at foreign content, and not necessarily engaging empathetically in the issues (Hafez, 2007, p. 20). As Khiabany (2016) notes, new technologies may expose users to other places,

but these technologies “by themselves cannot bypass assumptions, prejudices and stereotypes” (p. 231).

Another phenomenon specific to foreign news is the notion of “compassion fatigue,” especially when people cannot directly do something about the problem. Maria Kyriakidou’s research on foreign disasters has helped nuance this concept (2014; 2015). She suggests four levels of “media witnessing” (2015). *Affective* witnessing is characterized by feelings of “shock” and being “moved.” *Ecstatic* witnessing involves much more emotional involvement, even obsession. *Politicized* witnessing is when the audience member engages with root causes and power dynamics at play. And finally, *detached* witnessing sees the event as largely irrelevant to the viewer’s life. These various forms of witnessing ultimately have bearing on how an event is remembered, and its potential for becoming a cosmopolitan memory (Kyriakidou, 2009).

Global rise of nativist–populist politics

In the last decade, there has been a notable worldwide rise in nativist–populist political parties and candidates, fueled by various factors such as economic insecurity, anxieties about demographic change, and disillusionment with the political establishment (Flew, 2020). Key examples include the election of Donald Trump in the United States, the United Kingdom’s Brexit referendum, and the rise of far-right parties across Europe, though populist movements have grown in both the global north and south. These movements typically advocate for nationalism, protectionist policies, and anti-immigration stances, often capitalizing on anti-globalist sentiment and distrust of established institutions (Bob, 2012; Brubaker, 2017). This global trend has significant implications for international treaties like the Paris Agreement, supranational bodies like the U.N., as well as democratic norms within countries.

Moreover, a growing body of research has been devoted to study of transnational communication in right-wing social movements (Bob, 2012; Caiani & Kröll, 2015; Leidig, 2019), suggesting it is more common on the right than previously understood (Bob, 2012; Caiani & Kröll, 2015). Froio and Ganesh’s (2018) analysis of retweets between European far-right parties identified points of contact around immigration issues. In an analysis of the German hashtag #Merkelmussweg (“Merkel has to go”), Davey and Ebner (2017) found that about 40% of the geo-tagged tweets came from outside Germany. Grumke (2013) has argued that an “international of nationalists” is forming among far-right nationalist parties and organizations in Europe. Although Grumke (2013) observes that anti-Americanization is one of the uniting views on the European right (p. 47), Caiani and Kröll (2015) also see a “striking

ideological convergence” between North American white nationalism and European nationalist parties (p. 338). “The unifying feature of this global identity is the common enemy, namely globalization” they write (p. 343).

Answering the call for Empirical–Analytical approaches to cosmopolitanism

As cosmopolitan theory has matured, there has been a growing call for empirical and analytical approaches to studying cosmopolitanism, moving away from purely normative perspectives. Scholars such as Beck (2006), Skey (2013), and Delanty (2006) have emphasized the need for methodological innovation to better understand cosmopolitan communication, although their initial focus was not specifically on social media. Beck, in particular, sought to counter “methodological nationalism” by promoting a global and cosmopolitan perspective that transcends national boundaries and explores the impact of globalization on communication practices and social interactions.

Delanty’s (2006) concept of “critical cosmopolitanism” highlights the necessity for empirical and analytical approaches to cosmopolitanism. Critical cosmopolitanism seeks to challenge conventional understandings of cosmopolitanism and encourages researchers to examine the role of power relations, social structures, and cultural dynamics in shaping cosmopolitan communication and engagement. Skey (2013) has further argued for the importance of empirical research to study the ways in which individuals engage with cosmopolitanism, noting engagement with the other “is not only about achieving progressive aims or values, but may well be the outcome of far more strategic goals, some of which may be far from enlightened” (p. 240). He argues that people may be circumstantially cosmopolitan and calls for research that uncovers the micro-level processes that contribute to the development of cosmopolitan attitudes, identities, and practices, as well as the potential barriers that hinder their emergence.

These empirical–analytical approaches seek to differentiate cosmopolitan practices from cosmopolitan outcomes, offering a more nuanced understanding of the complex and multifaceted nature of cosmopolitanism in various contexts. However, this involves identifying quantifiable measures of cosmopolitan practices and acknowledging that, as Hannerz (2006) argues, “Trying to use cosmopolitanism as an analytical category, then, we will apparently need to include some people who are not aware that they are cosmopolitans, or who even deny it” (p. 23). Other scholars have pointed to the seemingly paradoxical nature of cosmopolitanism being both a challenge to and a source of elite power (Schmoll, p. 255). To address such

conundrums and provide a framework for studying cosmopolitan practices, Beck proposed the concept of cosmopolitanization.

Cosmopolitanization

In Beck's theory (2006; 2011) he argues that people have become *cosmopolitanized* as their local worlds have been flooded with global influences, whether they embrace these changes or not. In this view, cosmopolitanism is not necessarily *openness* to engage with the other, but an *ever-present* engagement through the processes of globalization (2011, p. 1349). For Beck, this described the constant blending of the local, national, and international in contemporary life. Because of this "sense of boundarylessness," he argued scholars should avoid equating normative cosmopolitanism with cosmopolitan practices and experiences, which may not be voluntary acts, but part of the condition of cosmopolitanization. For example, Beck suggests that, while it seems paradoxical, fundamentalist and right-wing movements would use globalized communication to meet their anti-globalization aims.

Research on right-wing transnational movements (described above) is not typically framed using cosmopolitan studies, but the types of communication described echo the "communities of global risk" described by Beck. However, Beck's framework helps explain how people can engage in cosmopolitan practices without necessarily leading to cosmopolitan outcomes, offering a more comprehensive approach to understanding cosmopolitanism in the context of contemporary media. That is, it is less about what *should be* and more about describing *how* people and societies engage with globalization.

With this in mind, I now present a brief description of the communicative functions of Twitter that make it a potentially cosmopolitan space. This is followed by a summary of how cosmopolitan communication can be operationalized in previous literature based on the functions available on the platform.

IV. Twitter as a subject of research

Twitter was launched in 2006 under the name Twtr. It began as a group mobile texting service, through which users could send out updates to a group of friends. “Its original intent, in other words, was to be of importance on an interpersonal rather than geopolitical scale” (Burgess & Baym, 2020, p. 5).

As a side feature, users could also post

their updates on Twtr.com, though as one tech journalist wrote at the time, “I imagine most users are not going to want to have all of their Twtr messages published on a public website” (Arrington, 2006, para. 5). The text service quickly went by the wayside, and the site, renamed Twitter.com was embraced by the tech community and bloggers; it was often described as a “microblogging” platform.

As Burgess and Baym (2020) write in *Twitter: A Biography*, Twitter from the beginning “almost demanded that its users develop their own ideas about what to do with it” (p. 7). Its minimalist interface and taxonomic ambiguity – was it a social network or a blog? – opened it up to user innovation. Even referring to messages on Twitter as “tweets” was a user invention that Twitter later trademarked (p. 33). Twitter users also developed three features that have since become familiar on many social media platforms:

- The concept of the #hashtag, intended to make content on a topic or theme easier to search, originated on Twitter as a user innovation. It was later made part of the official infrastructure of not only Twitter but Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and other platforms.
- Addressing another user through @mentions and @replies facilitated conversations that other users could follow along with.
- Resharing content through the “retweet,” were initially developed by users who would add “RT” to the beginning of the message. Eventually Twitter created a button to do this.

Thanks to such innovations, along with the increasing prevalence of smart phones, Twitter started being used for not just interactions with friends but as a news-oriented site for connecting with strangers (Figure 6). Rogers (2014) notes that in 2009, Twitter’s tagline changed from “What are you doing” to “What’s happening?” (p. xvi). The new environment

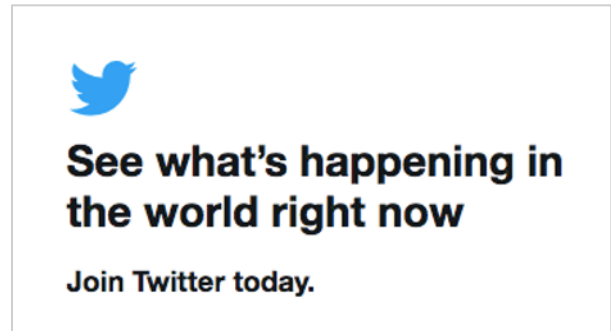


Figure 6. Twitter's tagline, 2018

became especially clear during the 2010-2011 uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East, known as the Arab Spring, when videos from the ground circulated on Twitter. Users found they could follow people updating live on the conflicts rather than waiting for national correspondents to report on the action. Khiabany (2016) suggests these, along with the 2011 Occupy Wall Street movement, were to Twitter what the Gulf War was to CNN: the Gulf War turned CNN into a serious news network, and social uprisings gave Twitter social and political legitimacy (p. 224). In 2012, Twitter billed itself as the “global town square.”

Twitter has never become a site that a majority of people use, even in the United States. It is a platform that is at once “open to multiple uses, populated by passionate insiders, but mysterious to outsiders” (Burgess & Baym, 2020, p. 12). Yet it has been intertwined with many major cultural and political moments of the last decade, including #JeSuisCharlie, #MeToo, #BLM, and the ever-present K-Pop fandoms. Though Lim (2018) reminds us that movements do not “start” on Twitter, the platform acts as a means for people to engage live with unfolding events. Similarly, the platform has helped bring concepts of “wokeness” and “cancel culture” into the current cultural vernacular. Research on inter-platform exchange suggests Twitter acts as a kind of bridge between more underground, subversive, niche, or fringe cultures, and the journalists and other cultural elites who pass on messages to wider mainstream culture (e.g., Phillips, 2018).

For this reason, Twitter has become an important tool for companies, institutions, and politicians to reach, if not a lot of people, then the right people. Even though not many voters are on Twitter, it has become part of campaign infrastructure in many countries, precisely because of its outsized cultural reach. In 2015, Hillary Clinton didn’t announce her candidacy for president through a press conference or a speech: she tweeted out a video. Donald Trump, meanwhile, used the platform to highlight his anti-elite, break-the-rules personality (Enli, 2017), first as a candidate and later as president of the United States, introducing a presidential model that’s been informally called “governing by tweet” (Gessen, 2017). It didn’t matter that most of his supporters aren’t on Twitter; they would get the message filtered through other news media and social media.

The Trump presidency at once elevated the role of Twitter in global politics, and also threatened its legitimacy as a democratic tool. First, it was discovered Russia used an army of fake Twitter accounts to try to destabilize the American electorate, a strategy of what has been called “cyber warfare” the Kremlin deployed in other democracies as well (Singer & Brooking, 2018). Moreover, the openness and news-oriented culture of Twitter made it easy to quickly disseminate huge volumes of misinformation or “fake news” to receptive publics (Phillips,

2018). It also became clear that Twitter's ability to facilitate specialized communities also enabled white nationalists to find each other, putting further pressure on the platform to moderate content. Twitter reported a number of changes to stop coordinated tweeting, sharing of false information, and hate speech. In 2020, it began labeling or removing tweets with misinformation, including those from President Trump. His personal account, @realDonaldTrump was first temporarily suspended and then removed from the platform following the attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6., 2021. Twitter said Trump's support for the rioters violated the company's Glorification of Violence policy (Twitter Inc., 2021).

Identifying cosmopolitan communication on Twitter

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Twitter's functions for non-reciprocal following and low threshold for interaction allow users to easily form connections with strangers. Due to these affordances, Twitter networks have been found to be more likely to span national borders than other social media sites (Ghemawat, 2016; Leetaru et al., 2013). Users can make their accounts private, but the platform's tendency to be news and event-driven creates a culture that encourages publicness. Tweets by public accounts are available through Twitter APIs, which offer researchers relatively detailed information on posts and user profiles. This data lends itself toward quantitative analysis, but also offers a large potential pool of candidates for qualitative study.

As part of my research planning, I reviewed previous studies and identified the way they operationalized cross-border on Twitter. These studies, listed in Table 2, come from various fields, including linguistics, election studies, and network science (none of these studies explicitly uses "cosmopolitan communication.") I found that scholars most often operationalized cross-border communication through the retweet and @mention functions of Twitter, as well as through more passive forms of engaging with foreign topics in either foreign content or in shared links. Use of language is also used as a sign of cosmopolitan or transnational communication. These are the primary ways I define cosmopolitan communication in the research of this dissertation as well. I will note that a number of the studies in the table were published within the last few years and so were not available during the planning stage of my research. I include them here to demonstrate the relative consistency in approaches. The methods will be further described in Chapter 5.

Table 2. Previous empirical research on cosmopolitan citizenship & Twitter

Research arenas	Article	Year	Case	Analytical unit	Operationalization
language, Arab Spring	Bruns, A., Highfield, T., & Burgess, J. (2013). The Arab Spring and social media audiences: English and Arabic Twitter users and their networks. <i>American Behavioral Scientist</i> , 57(7), 871-898.	2013	Egyptian Revolution, Libyan civil war	retweets and @mentions between users in different language groups	retweets & @
public spheres, environment, risk	Chen, W., Tu, F., & Zheng, P. (2017, 2017/07/03). A transnational networked public sphere of air pollution: Analysis of a Twitter network of PM2.5 from the risk society perspective. <i>Information, Communication & Society</i> , 20(7), 1005-1023.	2017	PM2.5 air particle	tweets about air pollution in multiple languages	tweet content & language
elections, language, global public spheres	Cheng, Y.-C., & Chen, P.-L. (2014). Global social media, local context: A case study of Chinese-language tweets about the 2012 presidential election in Taiwan. <i>Aslib Journal of Information Management</i> , 66(3), 342-356.	2014	Taiwanese election	retweets and @mentions between users in different language groups	retweets & @
network dynamics, language	Eleta, I., & Golbeck, J. (2014). Multilingual use of Twitter: Social networks at the language frontier. <i>Computers in Human Behavior</i> , 41, 424-432.	2014	network data of bilingual users	follow relation between users of different language groups	follower/ee
extremism, movements	Froio, C., & Ganesh, B. (2018). The transnationalisation of far right discourse on Twitter. <i>European Societies</i> , 1-27.	2018	far-right parties and groups in Europe	retweets of a far-right parties or movements from another country	retweets
global public spheres, Europeanization	Hänska, M., & Bauchowitz, S. (2019). Can social media facilitate a European public sphere? Transnational communication and the Europeanization of Twitter during the eurozone crisis. <i>Social Media + Society</i> , 5(3).	2019	Eurozone crisis	cross-border tweets between geolocated users	retweets, @, & quoted tweets
news, cosmopolitanism, network dynamics	Herdağdelen, A., Zuo, W., Gard-Murray, A., & Bar-Yam, Y. (2013). An exploration of social identity: The geography and politics of news-sharing communities in twitter. <i>Complexity</i> , 19(2), 10-20.	2013	tweets that share New York Times articles	sharing world news from the New York Times	link sharing
social movement, environment	Hopke, J. E. (2015). Hashtagging politics: Transnational anti-fracking movement Twitter practices. <i>Social Media + Society</i> , 1(2).	2015	anti-fracking movement	tweets about fracking in multiple languages	tweet content & language
network dynamics, language, geography	Leetaru, K., Wang, S., Padmanabhan, A., & Shook, E. (2013). Mapping the global Twitter heartbeat: The geography of Twitter. <i>First Monday</i> , 18(5).	2013	general Twitter data	calculate distance between users connected by a retweet who can be geolocated	retweets

public opinion, political communication, connective action	Meneses, M.-E., Martín-del-Campo, A., & Rueda-Zárate, H. (2018). #trumpenmexico: Transnational connective action in Twitter and the dispute on the border wall. <i>Comunicar</i> , 26(55), 39-48.	2018	U.S. election	tweets about Trump's visit to Mexico in Spanish and English	tweet content & language
news, agenda- setting	O'Boyle, J., & Pardun, C. J. (2021). How Twitter drives the global news agenda: Tweets from Brazil, Russia, India, China, the UK and US and online discourse about the 2016 US presidential election. <i>Global Media and Communication</i> , 17(3), 363-384.	2021	U.S. election	users who refer to Trump or Clinton in a tweet (non-retweet)	tweet content
movements, Arab Spring, language	Poell, T., & Darmoni, K. (2012). Twitter as a multilingual space: The articulation of the Tunisian revolution through #sidibouzid. <i>NECSUS-European Journal of Media Studies</i> , 1.	2012	Tunisian revolution	tweets about the Tunisian revolution in Arabic, English, and French	tweet content & language
news, media markets, journalism	Rauchfleisch, A., Vogler, D., & Eisenegger, M. (2020). Transnational news sharing on social media: Measuring and analysing Twitter news media repertoires of domestic and foreign audience communities. <i>Digital Journalism</i> , 8(9), 1206-1230.	2020	general Twitter data	users geolocated outside Switzerland who share a URL to a Swiss news outlet	link sharing
public spheres, Europe	Ruiz-Soler, J. (2020). European Twitter networks: Toward a transnational European public sphere? <i>International journal of communication</i> , 14, 27.	2020	tweets using #schengen and #ttip	retweets and @mentions between users geolocated in different European countries	retweets & @
public spheres, environment, transnationalism	Schünemann, W. J. (2020). Ready for the world? Measuring the (trans-) national quality of political issue publics on Twitter. <i>Media and Communication</i> , 8(4), 40-52.	2020	climate change	retweets and @mentions between users geolocated in different countries; similarities in hashtag use	retweets, @, and hashtags
nation branding, public opinion	Sevin, E., & Uzunoğlu, S. (2017). Do foreigners count? Internationalization of presidential campaigns. <i>American Behavioral Scientist</i> , 61(3), 315-333.	2017	U.S. election	tweets about the 2016 election in foreign languages	tweet content
publics, social movement	Shahin, S., Nakahara, J., & Sánchez, M. (2021). Black Lives Matter goes global: Connective action meets cultural hybridity in Brazil, India, and Japan. <i>New Media & Society</i> , Online First.	2021	BLM	tweets about George Floyd and BLM from outside the U.S.	tweet content
campaigning, European Union	Stier, S., Froio, C., & Schünemann, W. J. (2021). Going transnational? Candidates' transnational linkages on Twitter during the 2019 European parliament elections. <i>West European Politics</i> , 44(7), 1455-1481.	2021	European Parliament elections	retweets and @mentions by EP candidates of other candidates, Spitzenkandidates, and transnational parties	retweets & @
network dynamics, language	Takhteyev, Y., Gruzd, A., & Wellman, B. (2012). Geography of Twitter networks. <i>Social networks</i> , 34(1), 73-81.	2012	general Twitter data	calculate distance between users connected by follow relation, based on geotags	follower/ee

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined the literature on cosmopolitanism as it relates to communication and media studies. I have traced cosmopolitanism from its historical roots to its revival in scholarship on globalization as “a willingness to engage with the Other.” Of particular interest is the relationship of cosmopolitanism to the individual. The literature indicates that individuals can experience the world not only through direct contact but through mediated communication, through which publics can experience shared spaces, shared time, and share language. Many scholars have suggested that through these key concepts, something akin to cosmopolitan affinity and community can be formed on a global level.

I have proposed that in the digital era, cosmopolitan communication can combine elements of direct and mediated engagement with the Other. Yet we must also balance our expectations of online cosmopolitan communication against the scholarship that finds the Internet is not used to its global potential, that engagement with the Other does not necessarily lead to cosmopolitan sentiment, and that, as suggested by Beck’s theory of cosmopolitanization, the sense of global interconnectedness can also inspire anti-cosmopolitan sentiment. Following this discussion, I examined the features of Twitter that make it a (potentially) cross-border network and provided summary of previous literature that relates to cosmopolitan communication on Twitter.

In the following chapters, I present the empirical material used in this dissertation: namely, data on Scandinavian Twitter users. In Chapter 4 I situate this material in its cultural and political context through a discussion of the Scandinavian Twitter user. This is followed by Chapter 5, in which I lay out the methods for data collection and analysis.

The Scandinavian Twitter user

In an empirical investigation of global connections based on flows of information, goods, people, and capital, Ghemawat and Altman (2016) find that “countries that are small, rich, on the sea, fluent in major languages and close to major markets tend to have deeper global connectedness than those that are not” (p. 57). This is borne out in Scandinavia. The Scandinavian region as an area of study must be recognized as in some ways the ideal case for considering cosmopolitan communication online. In this chapter, I describe the region’s cultural and economic dimensions, with particular attention to the attributes related to politics and media use.

The Scandinavian Region

The Scandinavian region is made up of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, located in northern Europe (Figure 7). Scandinavia is not an official administrative region, but these

countries share similar cultures, languages, systems of government, and histories (Hilson, 2008). Governance is based on a multi-party parliamentary system, with hereditary monarchies largely offering diplomatic figureheads. Though these are among the most secular countries in the world, the Scandinavian

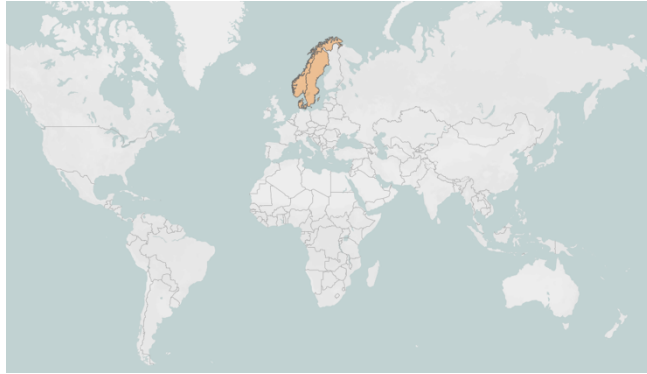


Figure 7. Scandinavia. Rendered in Tableau by author.

countries also share similar an Evangelical–Lutheran Christian heritage, and Norway and Denmark remain officially Christian nations. These countries are also among the wealthiest countries in the world, as measured by GDP per capita (World Bank, 2022).

These countries have historically had strong global ties, not only through diplomatic relations, but also in economic, military, and cultural exchange, and tend to be globally oriented countries (Elvestad & Shaker, 2017). Norris and Inglehart (2009) in their multi-country study of cosmopolitan communications found that Sweden and Norway had high levels of cosmopolitanism and trust in outsiders (and were among the few countries with both high levels of national identity and cosmopolitan identity (Figure 6.2, pp. 186–187; Denmark was not among the countries studied.) These are small countries, yet they have achieved what Nye (2004) calls “soft power,” or a cultural attraction, thanks to their diplomacy, humanitarianism, and progressive politics (Ingebritsen, 2006; Nye, 2004). These countries also present what Ingebritsen calls the “power of ideas” (p. 2). The Nordic Model, which also encompasses Iceland and Finland, makes the case for robust welfare states, progressive tax structures, and business regulation (Hilson, 2008). Though it differs significantly from the United States, the Scandinavian countries have strong cultural and military ties to the U.S., and previous research has demonstrated public interest in American politics (Karlsen (2013; Moe et al., 2019).

The European Social Survey finds Scandinavians have a strong sense of political efficacy – that is, they have a strong believe in their ability to influence their government (ESS Round 7, 2014). They also vote at 80-90 percent in most recent elections (International IDEA, n.d.). In 2022, the watchdog organization Freedom House ranked Norway, Sweden, and Denmark numbers 1, 3, and 6 respectively on their list of freest countries in the world, based on the electoral process, freedom of expression, government transparency, and ability to participation in a pluralistic governing process (Freedom House, 2022). The three Scandinavian countries also have high levels of educational attainment, are avid newspaper readers – and willing to

pay for digital news – and also have nearly universal internet access (Syvertsen et al., 2014). In the next section, I look more at the media systems in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden.

Scandinavian media

In their study of national media systems, Hallin and Mancini (2004) place the Scandinavian countries in the democratic-corporatist model, typical of Northern European countries, where the press may have historical ties to political parties but has largely been professionalized. Like liberal countries such as the U.S. and the U.K., the government is generally excluded from matters of content, but unlike these countries, there is state intervention in the market – particularly in the form of newspaper subsidies in Scandinavia and strong support for public broadcast (pp. 67–68). Syvertsen et al. (2014) write the “Media Welfare State” is an extension of the universalist approach that characterizes welfare state services. Like access to health care and education, access to media in the national language is viewed as a social good, and a responsibility of state policy.

Yet the internet creates a conflict in these historic approaches. On the one hand, a universalist approach ensures that the infrastructure for broadband and mobile is available even in remote regions of Scandinavia (Syvertsen et al., 2014, pp. 31–32). According to surveys, more than 90 percent of Scandinavians use the internet daily (Eurostat, 2021). Scandinavia already imported more American television content than most European countries (Robinson, 2016, p. 22). As Ohlsson (2015) writes, Scandinavians’ penchant for new media has further diverted viewership away from the nationally produced, subsidized content and toward global content on YouTube and Netflix. This threatens to undermine the relatively widespread consumption of national media (Syvertsen et al., 2014). Moreover, this raises questions about the national media’s role in unifying Scandinavian societies, and even maintaining the language, as much of this foreign content is in English (p. 43).

The media systems are also challenged by increasingly diverse populations, and the political tension this creates at times (Lundby & Repstad, 2018). Ethnic diversity has reconfigured notions of citizenship in these countries and a cultural sense of what it means to “be” Danish, Norwegian, or Swedish (Brochmann & Seland, 2010, p. 433). Although the three Scandinavian countries have taken very different approaches to immigration and integration, right-wing populist parties such as the Swedish Democrats, the Progress Party in Norway, and the Danish People’s Party have made gains in recent years in each of the three nations (Herkman & Jungar, 2021). Lövheim and Lied (2018) write that these parties often emphasize the Christian heritage of the nations, echoing the “civilizationist” tones of far-right parties in

other European countries that seek to Other-ize Muslims on identarian and “cultural” grounds rather than on religious grounds (p. 68; see also Brubaker, 2017). In Scandinavia, these parties still tend to be viewed as outside the mainstream, but even when they don’t win elections, they manage to shift the focus of the conversation and move other parties to the right (Herkman & Jungar, 2021, p. 245).

In tandem with the rise of nationalist–populist parties, the last decade has also seen growth in alternative, nativist-right media, which have benefited from the network dynamics of social media (Larsson, 2020; Sandberg & Ihlebæk, 2019). These outlets, generally digital natives, devote considerable attention to immigration and especially Muslim immigrants (Ihlebak & Nygaard, 2021; Figenschou & Ihlebæk, 2019), and position themselves as champions of free speech and challenging what’s been called in Sweden the “opinion corridor” (*åsiktskorridor*) (Dahle, 2021).

While legacy media brands still dominate Scandinavian media habits (Newman, 2019), fragmentation and polarization are a constant concern in Scandinavian politics, which have historically been consensus oriented (Kjeldsen et al., 2021, p. 367). The internet gives citizens more agency in curating content, and facilitates connections with ideological communities, both within the country or – as this dissertation proposes – outside the country.

Digital platforms (and especially Twitter) in Scandinavian countries

Reflecting on the changes in political communication in the Scandinavian region, Lindén et al. (2021) write that in recent years “we see a tendency for political debates that use to take place in local media arenas to gradually be moving to social media” (p. 167). Transnational digital platforms, particularly Facebook and Twitter, are now intertwined with the local and national public spheres in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden. These are important platforms for news outlets, politicians, public agencies, and organizations to establish communication channels, as well as means through which members of the public connect with these sources and each other.

Research on the expansion of political communication to digital platforms in Scandinavia has covered a range of functions, including the use of these channels during terrorist attacks (Eriksson, 2015) and public health crises (McInnes & Hornmoen, 2018); as tools for lobbying (Figenschou & Fredheim, 2020) and activism (Haastrup, 2022; Martinsson & Ericson, 2022); and for public diplomacy and nation branding (Christensen, 2013; Rasmussen & Merkelsen, 2014). Perhaps the most studied area, however, is elections. Researchers have investigated social media use by parties and politicians (Enli & Skogerbø, 2013; Karlsen, 2013; Karlsen &

Enjolras, 2016; Larsson, 2019; Larsson & Moe, 2014; Petrarca et al., 2019; Skovsgaard & Van Dalen, 2013); by political media (Larsson et al., 2017; Skogerbø & Krumsvik, 2015); and by members of the public to follow and interact with politicians (Kalsnes et al., 2017; Karlsen, 2015); share information (Jensen et al., 2016; Larsson & Moe, 2016), and to comment on live debates (Kalsnes et al., 2014; Sandberg et al., 2019).

Among the central takeaways from this body of literature is that perceptions that digital network platforms have not radically transformed politics. Politicians often do not use digital platforms to communicate directly with constituents (Larsson & Moe, 2016; Ekman & Widholm, 2017). Social media conversations are still strongly dependent on agenda setting in the traditional press (Larsson & Moe, 2016; Skogerbø et al., 2016). And citizen public discourse is not characterized so much by policy debate as by affective statements rooting on a politician, party, or cause they believe in (Eriksson, 2015; Martinsson & Ericson, 2022; Kalsnes et al., 2014). Yet the findings also point to important shifts. Digital platforms do open up space for marginalized voices that aren't represented in the traditional press (Skovsgaard & Van Dalen, 2013), and may contribute to greater personalization of politics – that is, greater focus on individual politicians and their personal characteristics and performances as “authentic”, than on the political parties (Ekman & Widholm, 2017; Enli, 2016; Enli & Skogerbø, 2013; Larsson, 2019).

The literature also identifies differences between Twitter and other platforms. For example, in their study of Norwegians' interactions with politicians, Kalsnes et al., (2017) find that Twitter users experience, or at least perceive to experience, a higher level of interaction with politicians than Facebook users. Facebook has more “ordinary” users, and Twitter users are younger, more highly educated and politically engaged. This makes sense in light of Enli and Skogerbø's (2013) findings that politicians for their part perceive Facebook as a site for one-way marketing, while Twitter is for more continuous dialogue, albeit with “established networks of politically engaged Twitter users” (p. 769). Larsson's (2017) research on Instagram, meanwhile, suggests that it tends to privilege already established political figures, while lesser known political actors were more successful on Twitter – somewhat surprising given that at the time Instagram was relatively new as a political medium.

These findings reflect that compared with other platforms, Twitter has never become a “mainstream” platform in the sense that a large portion of the population use it. Public surveys and market data demonstrate that Twitter remains a niche medium (see Table 3). Twitter users also tend to be younger than Facebook users, but older than users of Instagram and TikTok. Surveys suggest Twitter, though not widely used, has a more even age distribution than other

platforms. In Norway, for example, about as many 18-29-year-olds as 50-59-year-olds reported having a Twitter profile (~40 percent; Ipsos Norge, 2021). This is not the case with gender, however. More men than women use Twitter in Scandinavian countries by about 70/30 – a more lopsided gender difference than the global average, 60/40 (DataReportal, 2021). This may be related to Twitter’s more niche-platform status in the Scandinavian countries, attracting the most politically vocal, who tend to be men, even in these egalitarian countries (Enjolras et al., 2013). Twitter is also more widely used in Norway and Sweden for news than in Denmark, as can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Twitter use in Scandinavian countries (2021)

Country	Population (2021)	Internet penetration (%)	Have Twitter profile (%)	Est. population with Twitter profile	Use Twitter for news (% internet users)	Est. use Twitter for news
Norway	5 391 000	98	21	1 265 000	7	370 000
Sweden	10 452 000	96	21	2 153 000	7	702 000
Denmark	5 867 000	98	9	501 000	5	287 700

Sources: SSB, SCB, DST, Ipsos Norge, Nordicom, DataReportal, Reuters Digital News Report 2021, author’s calculations.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have examined the Scandinavian region, comprising Norway, Denmark, and Sweden. This is a highly globally facing region, having already a cosmopolitan bent through its relationship with other global players and “soft power” in global politics. Yet the countries in this region have also been highly protective of their media systems, providing subsidies to maintain offerings in the national languages. These schemes are somewhat threatened by digitalization and Scandinavians’ enthusiasm for digital platforms. Twitter, though not used by large portions of the population, is nevertheless an influential elite platform in politics and campaigning. In the next chapter I discuss the collection of data about Twitter users in Scandinavia.

Data & Methods

This dissertation consists of four articles that investigate cosmopolitan communication on Twitter, focusing on the themes shared space, shared time, and shared values. In the following chapter, I outline the research strategy used here, the process of collecting the quantitative and qualitative empirical material, and the analytical methods applied in the articles. The chapter ends with a discussion of the ethical considerations raised by this type of research, and particular dilemmas encountered.

Studying Twitter or studying real life?

Noortje Marres (2017) writes that Internet researchers must confront with the question of whether they are studying society or studying technology (p. 116). She argues that too often researchers claim to study conversations or public opinion or human behavior. While technology is certainly a resource for these things, the digital context also influences on how conversations, public opinion, and human behavior is expressed. Marres proposes that the degree to which “society” or “technology” are being studied varies by situation, and “while we may set out to do *social* research with digital platforms, we may easily end up studying *media-technological* dynamics, and the other way around,” (p. 138, emphasis added). She suggests that the researcher, rather than claiming they have studied one or the other, should rather

continue examining and re-examining what the object of enquiry is, and identify which aspects of the research fall on which side. Marres writes:

One of the best ways to ensure this is to be flexible in our empirical approach and to be prepared to adjust the definition of our empirical object in view of our findings, to allow ‘the empirical object to emerge’ from the analysis. (p. 138)

That is, the research process must be iterative, and the researcher must recognize what they have set out to study may not be available in empirical material gathered from digital platforms – or, that the data might exist but it cannot be extracted. Or, as Marres suggests, what *is* available may be unexpectedly revealing of something else.

Inspired by Marres, I have tried to take a reflexive approach to the research project presented in this dissertation, recognizing the limitations of my source of data. In this chapter, I take a somewhat narrative approach to describing the research process, reflecting on the aims and limitations of this type of research, and how I attempted to grapple with the question of studying society vs. studying technology.

A mixed data/mixed methods approach

Since the goal of this dissertation is to better understand cosmopolitan communication on digital platforms, a variety of data types and analytical methods are used in the papers presented. The papers are largely divided by qualitative and quantitative methods. However, Big Data confuses the question of qualitative and quantitative. Gaffney and Puschmann (2014, p. 64) note that Big Data by its nature must be processed in a quantitative way, simply in order to find what the researcher is looking for: for example, the most popular tweet, or the most retweeted user. Yet this data can be analyzed qualitatively, using discourse analysis or thematic analysis. Moreover, analyzing Big Data *only* through quantitative methods tends to lose some of the underlying meaning in the data – a problem I encountered in articles 2 and 3. (Ultimately, both include qualitative, anecdotal examples of tweets in order to make sense of aggregate trends.)

Table 4. *Summary of articles' data and methods*

Article	Title	Data	Methods
1	Fungible Citizenship: On the Internet No-One Knows You're a Swede	Qualitative interviews	Qualitative thematic analysis
2	Monitorial–Cosmopolitans, Networked–Locals: The case of Scandinavian Twitter engagement with the 2020 US election	big data from 2020 US election	Network analysis; typology; quantitative political classification
3	#MakeSwedenGreatAgain: Media events as politics in the deterritorialised nationalism debate	big data from 2018 Swedish election	Network analysis; multi-modal network analysis; content analysis
4	George Floyd and cosmopolitan memory formation in online networks: A report from Northern Europe	Qualitative interviews and users' profile data	Qualitative thematic analysis; Network analysis

In this case, the research begins with Big Data collections – that is, collections of data in the hundreds of thousands and tens of millions of units – which then drives the gathering of qualitative data. In this way, the research procedure is somewhat akin to what Yin (2014) calls a “nested arrangement,” such as when the researcher begins with a quantitative survey of institutions and then qualitatively studies one particular institution (p. 66). This allows the researcher to “humanize” the quantitative survey data through interviews with people representative of larger trends. Likewise, based on trends identified in the Big Data collections, I sought out Twitter users in Scandinavian countries to participate in in-depth qualitative interviews.

The benefit of this approach is three-fold. First, using the Big Data to locate users gave me better context, and more choice, for the participants. Had I used a snow-ball sampling technique or based the selection of users to previous studies of Twitter in Scandinavian countries, I likely would have over-estimated the role of traditional elites like journalists, politicians, and celebrities in transnational settings. Moreover, it would have been more difficult to find the users who never tweet in Scandinavian languages. Secondly, the qualitative interviews helped inform the way I thought about the analyses of the Big Data sets. For example, the conceptual framework for choosing participants eventually led to the typology in Article 2. The interviews also helped me see the underlying meaning in huge amounts of data, and the significance of seemingly small interactions. Finally, although only Article 4 incorporates both tweets and interviews, the overall use of both forms of data in this dissertation contributed to my more holistic picture of cosmopolitan communication, which I reflect upon in the Discussion.

The data and methods used in each article are summarized in Table 4. In the following sections I describe the data collection methods, starting with the Big Data collections and then moving to the qualitative interviews. I discuss the analytical methods used to some degree.

However, because the analytical techniques are highly specific to the individual articles and are described in detail therein, I will not go into the individual analyses extensively in this chapter.

Big Data & collection periods

Large-scale data collections were made from Twitter using keywords related to the 2020 U.S. election, the 2018 Swedish national election, and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. A collection from the 2019 Danish national election was also attempted, but technical problems made the data unreliable (see Table 5). In addition, I retained data I had collected previously from the 2016 U.S. election and a random sample from the Twitter stream in May 2017 (see Robinson, 2018). In total, the data collections comprise around half a billion tweets.

These events were selected because, as previously described, shared witnessing of events has been an important theme in both cosmopolitan studies and media studies in general. Elections especially hold a special place as events, being pivotal moments when public opinion is activated and legitimized, and for this reason have been of special interest to Internet researchers. Moreover, unlike particular social movements, elections cover a range of topics and invite participation from a larger portion of the public than a single cause might— and importantly, a wider range of political ideologies. In addition, elections are quintessential nation-state events, making them particularly interesting for investigating the way political communication crosses borders, and in a way that might have real-life political effects (see “foreign influence”). The choice of the U.S. election reflects the outsized role that American politics play in Scandinavian countries and the world as a whole, and also allows for study of the way Scandinavian users reach *outside* their countries to engage with a global event. The choice of the Swedish election on the other hand allows for the study of the way national politics, even of a relatively small country, become global politics through the world reaching *in*.

Table 5. Twitter data collections

Collection	Keywords	Collection period	Total tweets
2016 U.S. election	clinton, trump	Sept. 24 – Nov. 11, 2016	68,476,389
2017 random sample	none (1 percent of global twitter stream)	May 2 – May 9, 2017	12,889,933
2018 Swedish election (English)	swedish/en party(ies), swedish/en election(s), swedish/en vote(s)/voter(s)	Aug. 10 – Sept. 28, 2018	198,635
2018 Swedish election (Swedish)	svpol, val18, val2018	Aug. 10 – Sept. 28, 2018	221,686
2019 Danish election	danish/denmark party(ies), danish/denmark election(s), danish/denmark vote(s)/voter(s)	May 25 – July 1, 2019	1,648*
2020 COVID-19 pandemic	covid, covid19, corona, coronavirus, virus	March 15 – July 16, 2020	256,078,914
2020 U.S. election	trump, biden	Sept. 26 – Nov. 9, 2020	194,604,902
<i>Total tweets collected</i>			532,472,107

*Due to incompatibilities between the server type and the DMI-TCAT, the collection process was interrupted by frequent outages and ultimately the data was not used.

Additionally, I collected data on an unplanned global event, the COVID-19 pandemic, which occurred around the half-way point in the project. This was an unprecedented event that dealt with the kinds of shared risks Beck identified in his development of cosmopolitanization. Ultimately, the article produced from this data took a different direction from the theme of this dissertation and is therefore not part of the articles presented here. However, my analyses of the COVID-19 data did inform the selection of participants in the interviews.

Data access & collection

All the data collections were made through Twitter's Streaming API (v1.1), which provided real time access to the global stream of publicly available tweets (tweets that do not come from private accounts). The tweets were selected using keywords related to the event

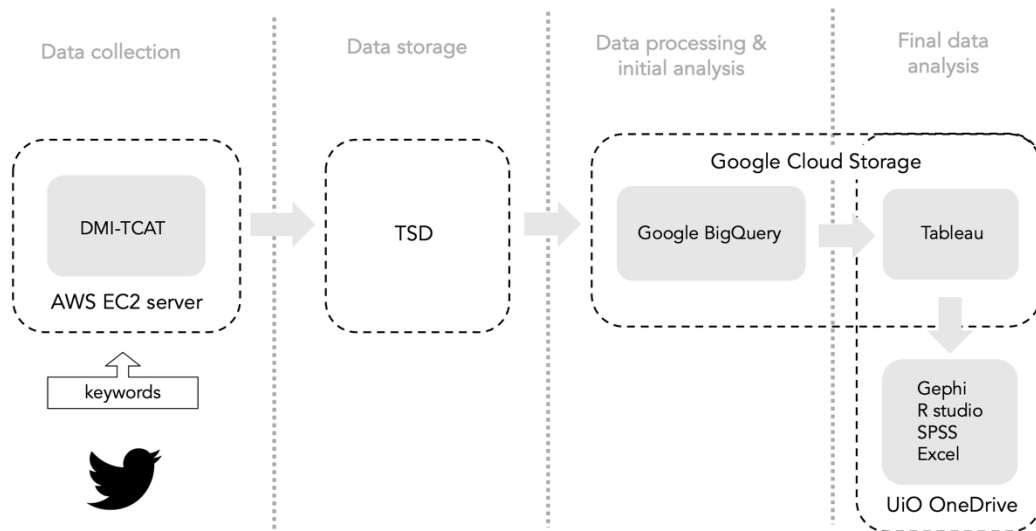
being studied (see Table 5). Other means of acquiring tweets are available, including retroactive searches and purchasing data through third-party providers. In January 2021, Twitter also introduced the API for Academic Research, which includes access to historical data. I applied for and received access to this API, though I did not end up using it for this dissertation. Deleted tweets and tweets from accounts that have been deleted are not available, including, crucially, Donald Trump's account, which was an important figure in almost all of the collections.

The downside of relying on the Streaming API is that it is subject to Twitter's rate limit, which caps collections to 1 percent of the total tweet stream. In other words, if your keyword would pick up more than 1 percent of all tweets everywhere at a given moment, you lose some unknown portion of tweets that should have otherwise been captured (Gaffney & Puschmann, 2014, p. 59). This problem has been documented by Twitter researchers, who suggest that rate limited data may not be a truly random sample; some studies suggest the rate limit may produce collections with more tweets containing links, hashtags, and mentions (Morstatter et al., 2013; Tromble et al., 2017), although the bias has not been found to be consistent. Morstatter et al. (2013) suggest the problem of the rate limit could be mitigated by long-term data collection. In this case, it is known that both the U.S. election and COVID-19 collections were impacted by rate limits, resulting in data loss. However, these collections were made over several months, consist of many millions of tweets, and are studied in aggregate, an approach that the literature suggests should mitigate major potential impacts. Even so, only Article 2 would be impacted by the rate limit and this issue is discussed in that article.

Data infrastructure & management

The Streaming API was accessed using the DMI-TCAT tool, developed by the University of Amsterdam's Digital Methods Initiative (Borra & Rieder, 2014). I installed the DMI-TCAT on Ubuntu or Debian servers rented from Amazon Web Services (AWS); servers located in the E.U. were selected in accordance with GDPR rules for data protection. Data collections, particularly for high-volume events such as the U.S. election and COVID, required frequent monitoring and recordkeeping. The DMI-TCAT creates "bins" of tweets, which can be stopped and started. When a bin would reach around 1-million tweets, I would start a new bin and stop the old one, in order to ensure the data would be manageable. I would periodically download the data in the bins as comma separated files (.csv), along with additional files listing the hashtags, URLs, and @mentions in each tweet through analysis tools provided by the DMI-TCAT. At the end of the data collection period, the data would be deleted from the Amazon

Figure 8. Workflow



server and the .csv files were uploaded to TSD, the University of Oslo’s service for storage of sensitive data.

For analysis of the tweets, I would temporarily upload the data to Google Cloud Storage and import it into tables in Google BigQuery, a data warehouse that allows for data analysis on a scale not possible on most desktop computers (e.g., Microsoft Excel has an upper limit of only 1 million rows). By running text-based SQL queries in BigQuery, I made subsets of data, such as random samples for exploratory analysis, or lists of Scandinavian and American users for Article 2. The tables of these smaller, more manageable subsets could then be connected to the data analysis and visualization software Tableau. R Studio, SPSS, Gephi, and Excel were used for additional statistical and network analysis. This workflow is illustrated in Figure 8. It follows the data management plan approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD).

Geolocating users and identifying cosmopolitan interactions

Identifying the geographic location of users was critical to empirically studying cosmopolitan communication. Yet the very geographic fungibility that makes digital platforms ripe for cosmopolitan communication also makes it difficult for researchers to determine location. Some Twitter research has used “geotagged” tweets – that is, tweets that include the latitude and longitude in the metadata. However, this is an opt-in function on Twitter and Leetaru et al. (2013) found that just a little over 2 percent of tweets on a given day were geotagged. I found in my own investigation of the data that the number has since dropped to less

than a tenth of a percent. Moreover, as Sloan and Morgan (2013) suggested, these tweets did not appear to be representative; the data was dominated by accounts for businesses and institutions rather than individual users. Ultimately, I did not rely on geotagged data.

Instead, I relied on text-based techniques used in previous studies on the geography of Twitter (including Bruns, 2016; Bruns, Burgess, & Highfield, 2014; Bruns & Enli, 2018; Hänska & Bauchowitz, 2019; Leetaru et al., 2013; Rauchfleisch et al., 2020; Sloan & Morgan, 2015). This method establishes location by matching toponyms (names of places) to the location the user provides, if any, on their profile page. In addition, I was able to use tweet language and language markers in user profiles to identify Scandinavian users, since these countries have national languages not widely spoken outside the region. The full code is available in the Appendix.

This method required extensive refining. Among the techniques I used to ensure the validity of this technique was comparing my list of users to the available geocoded data, examining locations with the highest frequency of English-only users, and running the users through an existing geocoder (e.g., Google's geocoding API). I also tested the reliability of Twitter's internal language coder, which detects the language of each tweet. Even though Twitter had a 99 percent accuracy rate in telling apart English from Scandinavian languages, the final 1 percent often let through extremely prolific accounts that could skew the eventual dataset. Through this process I discovered that certain criteria, such as language and user description, required additional cross-checks against other criteria (this is also how I developed an additional criterion for Scandinavian vowels in tweets and users' names). Any attempt to geolocate users will always produce errors. However, in a manual analysis of users, this method had a 94 percent accuracy rate, and it captured 82 percent of the tweets with geotags in the Scandinavian region.

For Article 2, I also developed lists of American toponyms to identify Twitter users in the United States, as described in the article. I then used Google BigQuery to identify interactions between subsets of users through the @mentions data. For example, to find Americans' interactions with Scandinavian users, I used the following lines of code:

```
SELECT *
FROM election_US.keyw_US_MENTIONS_nodupes_USERNAMES
WHERE lower(user_to_name) IN (

    SELECT lower(from_user_name)
    FROM election_Scans.all_USERNAMES_nodupes)
```

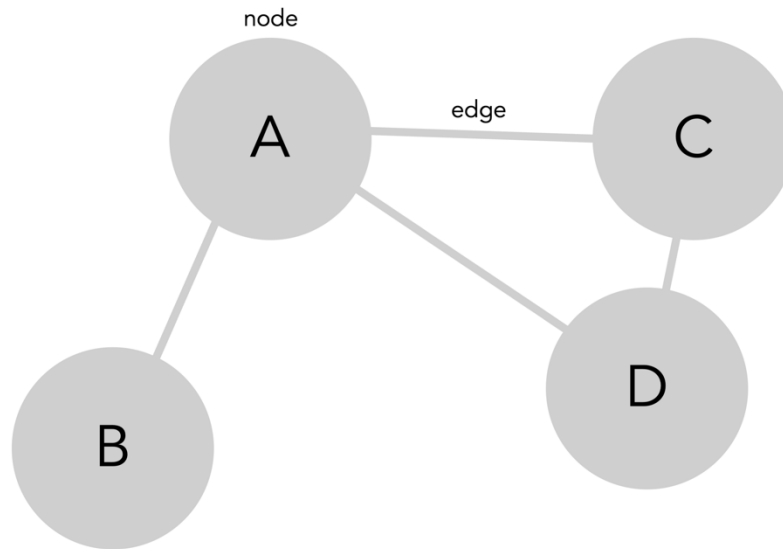


Figure 9. Nodes and edges. This network has four nodes and four edges. Node A has a degree centrality of 3; C and D have a degree centrality of 2, and B has a degree centrality of 1.

The ability to do these analyses on Big Data helped showed overall patterns of cosmopolitan communication on Twitter, and revealed who major actors were in transnational networks. As Steinert-Threlkeld (2018) writes, “the appeal of Twitter, and ‘big data’ more broadly, is that it provides data on more people in more places across more time than scholars could realistically hope to achieve with survey methods” (p. 72). However, I also found limitations to what could be understood from the Big Data collections. I frequently wondered about the people behind the accounts in the data, and the intentions, or intentionality, of the communication I was studying. To provide another perspective on cosmopolitan communication, I also interviewed Scandinavian Twitter users, as described in the next section.

Principles of social networks analysis

Network analysis is a methodological approach used to study the relationships and interactions between entities, whether people, organizations, units of information, or concepts. It allows the researcher to move beyond simple dyads (ties between one thing and another) to mapping out an entire web of shared connections, and seeing the paths of relationships that lead from one entity to another.

Though network analysis as a theory and method predates the internet, it has been particularly useful for understand the way information and power flows online. Newly developed computational tools have been central to the study of social media platforms, which exhibit many of the same qualities as offline social networks (Himmelboim, 2017, p. 12). These

tools also enable researchers to make sense of very large volumes of data and perform complex statistical analyses, which can help uncover hidden patterns within the data even before formal analysis begins. When applied to Twitter data, network analysis can provide insights into the structure, subnetworks, and major actors in the data.

Although network analysis can be applied to many different types of data, certain principles are at work in all applications of the method (Barabási, 2016; Himelboim, 2017). In network analysis, an entity (for example, a Twitter user) is a *node*, sometimes called vertices (see Figure 9). The connection between them (like one user @mentioning another) is an *edge*, also called links and ties. Nodes are generally visualized as a circle and edges are lines between them. Counting the number of nodes and edges in a network, and seeing between which nodes edges exist, allows the researcher to see who the most important or central users are in the network (Borgatti & Everett, 1992). While there are various measures of centrality, a common one is *degree*, which is a simple count of how many other nodes a node is connected to. This forms the basis of many other measurements on a network.

The studies in this dissertation apply network analysis in various ways. In Article 2, for example, I use it to map the networks created by tweets and retweets sent (edges) between Scandinavian and American users (nodes). Article 1 and Article 3 include visualizations of networks of tweeting. However, Article 2 and Article 4 also use network analysis as a means of analyzing concepts. In the case of Article 2, on the Swedish election, network analysis aids with the analysis of data produced through a quantitative content analysis of tweets. In this case, I find the relationships between themes (nodes) through tweets that use multiple themes (edges). Similarly, in Article 4, I use network analysis to show the distribution of themes identified in a qualitative thematic analysis of interview data.

While network analysis can be a powerful tool for analyzing digital data, is important to remember its limitations as well. As Papacharissi (2015) writes:

“Networks are only as active as the information flowing through them. It is not that networks do not exist without information sharing, *but it is the act of information sharing that renders them visible*. In this sense, actor nodes materialize digitally as they share information” (p. 126, emphasis added).

In other words, network analysis cannot show relationships that don't leave a collectable digital trace. There are three relevant points to make about this. First, so-called “lurkers,” people who use social media but do not post (and that's a lot of people), do not show up. In the case of data from Twitter's API, it is also not possible to user-level “favorite” data, leaving out people who liked a tweet, but did not leave enough data to be “rendered visible.”

Second, network data is dependent upon relationships. Users who do not @mention or retweet another user, for example, are not included in the network, although they are also worth study. Finally, we should remember when researching social media networks that no network is complete. There will always be additional actors that were not for one reason or another included in the data. In the case of Twitter studies, these may be users who were not captured because they didn't tweet or didn't tweet interactively, didn't tweet with the right keywords, or who have made their account private, among other factors. Therefore, while network analysis is useful for exploring patterns and structures of social interactions online, it can never provide a complete picture of the networks, nor of users' activities in the network.

Data-driven qualitative interviews

Qualitative interviews allow the researcher to understand phenomena as experienced by people involved in the phenomena, including how the meaning of a phenomenon is formed and transformed (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 5). The method is particularly useful to areas that have not been extensively researched yet. I took what Brinkmann and Kvale have described as a *conceptual* form of qualitative interview, or one that focuses on *how* people view things and talk about things (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, pp. 176–177). In particular, I was interested in how people thought about their place on Twitter, the globality of Twitter, and the purpose of their tweets. In addition, I sought to have an element of the *narrative* form of interview (pp. 178–179), which seeks to elicit storytelling by the participant. In my case, I asked the participants to tell the story of joining Twitter and how their relationship with the platform has evolved over time, and also to narrative the backstory of example tweets (described more below).

The interview guide took a semi-structured form in order to allow adaptation to the participant and the path that the interview took (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 6). In developing the guide, I began with thematic questions related to the literature on cosmopolitanism and transnational communication, such as motivations for using Twitter to follow political topics, how the user understands different audiences and “spheres” on the platform (inspired by Szerszynski and Urry, 2002), and their use of language. The final guide focuses on the following themes: Twitter backstory, language, motivation and audience, role and impact, imagined communities, and globality and identity. (See Appendix.)

(Show Card AF)
 People have different views about themselves and how they relate to the world. Using this card, would you tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about how you see yourself? (Read out and code one answer for each statement):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
V212. I see myself as a world citizen.	1	2	3	4
V213. I see myself as part of my local community.	1	2	3	4
V214. I see myself as part of the [French]* nation.	1	2	3	4
V215. I see myself as part of the [European Union]**	1	2	3	4
V216. I see myself as an autonomous individual.	1	2	3	4

* [Substitute your country's nationality for "French"]
 ** [Substitute appropriate regional organization for "European Union"]

Figure 10. World Values Survey question (source: Inglehart et al. 2014, p. 14)

As suggested by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 157), the thematic questions were generally not posed to the participant, but rather helped me stay on task during the interview. Instead, I developed a question, or several versions of a question, that addressed the theme in more everyday language (p. 158). Not all of these questions in the guide were necessary to ask, but having them written out helped give me options in the moment. I also included in the interview guide a prompt for discussing example tweets, to be adapted to each participant (this is discussed further below in “Tweets as elicitation devices.”)

Finally, the interview guide included a survey question from the World Values Survey that I administered at the end of the interview (see Figure 10). This question is often used to quantitatively measure cosmopolitan sentiment (e.g., Bayram, 2015). Among other things, the question helped elicit responses from the participant on particular terminology – especially “citizen of the world” – that relates to cosmopolitanism. It also helped me see how my impression of the participant aligned with what their self-description was when forced to choose. And finally, the survey question often elicited interesting comments from the participant, particularly if they felt the survey question was ambiguous or difficult to answer. I originally thought the data could be useful in reporting the results, but ultimately, I did not use survey in any of the articles.

Selecting and contacting participants

Reybold et al. (2012) write that participant selection for interviews “constitutes one of the most invisible and least critiqued methods in qualitative scholarship” (p. 700). Here I will try to provide transparency into my approach. My overall approach was to employ what Corbin

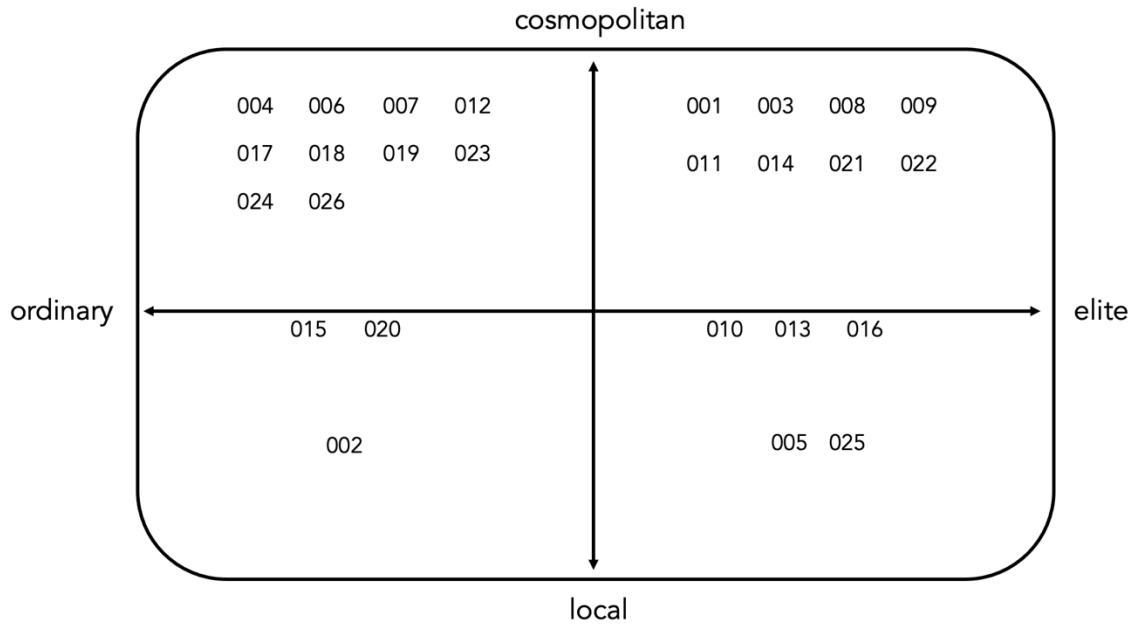


Figure 11. Typology for organizing participant selection. Totals: 13 ordinary users and 13 elite users; 18 cosmopolitans, 3 locals, and 5 straddlers.

and Strauss (2015) call “theoretical sampling,” in which analysis of the previous data informs the next selection of participant in order to “demonstrate different properties of concepts and show variation” (p. 135). The participants include a mix of “locals” and “cosmopolitans – that is, those who are both nationally and internationally oriented in their communication on Twitter, based on language use, as well as the networks they appeared in.

Initially, I sought to interview the most visible users in my Big Data. These were users in Scandinavian countries that often tweeted in English and were frequently retweeted and @mentioned outside of the region, essentially acting as key information brokers between Scandinavia and the English-language global Twittersphere. Notably, these were *not* the same elites as those previous literature studying national Twitterspheres had identified (i.e., politicians, journalists, or national celebrities). These users thus offered a new perspective on “elite-ness” on Twitter and had useful insights into the experience of geographic fungibility online.

However, I was also interested in the experience of the more typical – people with fewer followers who represent the experience of most people on the platform – and moreover, people who did *not* necessarily use Twitter to interact in global networks. Thus, I developed an internal typology to guide my search participants that included cosmopolitan elites, cosmopolitan ordinary users, local elites (politicians and journalists), and local ordinary users. This typology, and the eventual placement of the participants on it, is visualized in Figure 11. As is visible

below the X axis, some users I ultimately recategorized as “straddlers” between local and cosmopolitan orientations. I realized after talking to several participants that users I perceived as local based on their tweets in fact perceived themselves as using Twitter for cosmopolitan purposes. That is, they tweeted in their national language, but read a lot of international content. In fact, I found very few users in fact were “pure” cosmopolitans or “pure” locals, which ended up informing the way I reported the data in Article 1 and Article 4.

I employed the Big Data to identify people along these dimensions, with language use as a stand-in for local–cosmopolitan) and follower count and placement in networks as a way of measuring elite-ness. In addition, I sought other variations in participants. Among other factors I considered: gender, country, cultural background (languages used, race, immigrant background), and political ideology. Regarding this last characteristic: I already knew from the Big Data analyses that far-right and nativist-right users represented very active members of transnational networks. However, cold-contacting these users with requests to talk proved more difficult. As one user responded before ceasing contact, “Is there not some kind of objective, some kind of political correct agenda at the bottom of this[?]” Instead, I was able to eventually interview seven people who could be considered nativist- or far-right through a combination of an offline referral, good word of mouth between interviewees, and establishing follower–followee relationships in these networks.

Trying to balance these characteristics, I identified prospective participants and logged them in an encrypted document, which I continually updated throughout the data collection period (May 2020 – March 2021). I mainly contacted prospective participants via Direct Message on Twitter. I occasionally used email as well if they provided professional or contact information in their profile. One user I contacted on Facebook and another I called on the phone. Of the 58 requests I made 32 declined or didn’t respond. The final list of 26 participants is in Table 6.

There are several reasons why the sample has an N of 26. Qualitative studies often discuss achieving the “saturation” point, when “no new categories or relevant themes are emerging” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 139). And indeed, I did begin to see repetition in participants’ answers, such that I felt I had enough data answer the questions I had set out to answer. Other reasons included 1) I worried that I had not only enough, but *too* much data and that it would be difficult to synthesize; and moreover 2) the collection period was approaching 10 months. In the time since I had started, a vaccine had been developed for COVID-19, the BLM movement had become a worldwide phenomenon, and Donald Trump had lost an election. These events were now increasingly in the rearview mirror. Other events would surely

become more prominent in the mind of users, and I worried that additional data I collected would be less comparable to the existing data I had.

Qualitative interview samples are not supposed to be statistically representative. Even so, I will note that the characteristics of my sample are somewhat skewed toward certain types of users. First, they are highly followed and active users. In part this is due to the availability of data; “lurkers” do not show up in Big Data collections. Also, I noticed that elites tended to have more unique experiences, while ordinary users had similar perspectives, which led me to interview as many elites as ordinary users in the interest of variation. I also recognize my own bias in preferring users who had some sort of “personality” in their timeline, so that I knew what I was getting myself into; I tended to prioritize users who did more than just retweet or who gave some indication as to their gender/background/profession/etc. Additionally, anonymous users are under-represented. Most of the anonymous users I reached out to wanted to remain anonymous (although one helpful user did tip me off to other right-wing users he or she thought would be more willing to talk). Finally, despite my efforts to use various means of reaching participants, the list is also skewed toward users with their DMs open.

Table 6. Interview Participants

Participant	Sample	Country	User type	Age	Followers at time of interview	Gender	Has lived outside Scandinavia	Immigrant background*	Uses real name on Twitter	Third language on Twitter
001	'16 US election	Sweden	Cosmo-Elite	51	23288	M	X	X	X	
002	'18 Swedish election	Sweden	Local-Ordinary	24	1174	M		X	X	X
003	random 1%	Sweden	Cosmo-Elite	28	3503	M	X		X	
004	random 1%	Norway	Cosmo-Ordinary	49	1929	F			X	
005	COVID-19	Norway	Local-Elite	56	3340	M			X	
006	'16 US election	Denmark	Cosmo-Ordinary	49	345	M			X	
007	random 1%	Norway	Cosmo-Ordinary	23	320	F	X			
008	'16 US election	Norway	Cosmo-Elite	31	120600	F			X	
009	random 1%	Norway	Cosmo-Elite	52	6045	M	X		X	
010	random 1%	Sweden	Straddler-Elite	62	14200	M	X		X	
011	random 1%	Denmark	Cosmo-Elite	39	20200	F	X		X	X
012	referral	Norway	Cosmo-Ordinary	54	595	M	X			
013	random 1%	Sweden	Straddler-Elite	47	12100	M				
014	'16 US election	Norway	Cosmo-Elite	48	39100	M	X		X	

Participant	Sample	Country	User type	Age	Followers at time of interview	Gender	Has lived outside Scandinavia	Immigrant background*	Uses real name on Twitter	Third language on Twitter
015	COVID-19	Norway	Straddler-Ordinary	58	757	M	X		X	
016	COVID-19	Norway	Straddler-Elite	45	3272	M			X	
017	random 1%	Sweden	Cosmo-Ordinary	36	281	M	X	X		
018	'18 Swedish election	Sweden	Cosmo-Ordinary	60	7399	F	X	X		
019	random 1%	Sweden	Cosmo-Ordinary	29	2830	M			X	
020	'16 US election	Denmark	Straddler-Ordinary	54	9450	M	X			
021	COVID-19	Norway	Cosmo-Elite	"40s"	3701	F	X			X
022	random 1%	Norway	Cosmo-Elite	43	136300	M	X	X	X	X
023	random 1%	Sweden	Cosmo-Ordinary	56	384	F			X	
024	'16 US election	Sweden	Cosmo-Ordinary	38	1969	M			X	
025	COVID-19	Norway	Local-Elite	32	1830	M			X	
026	COVID-19	Sweden	Cosmo-Ordinary	44	1125	F	X	X	X	
TOTALS		Den=3 Nor=12 Swe=11	See Figure 8	47 (median)	3306 (median)	women=8 men=18	15	6	19	4

The final sample of participants includes nationalists, conspiracy theorists, a leader in Anonymous, a teacher, a member of the European Parliament, a local member of Norway's Progress Party (FrP), a survivor of Norway's Utøya massacre, a refugee, people who are the children of refugees, a journalist, an attorney, a security guard, a college student, a professor, business consultants, several unemployed people, a doctor, people of Kurdish, Congolese, and Palestinian origin, gamers, queer people, and fans of American football. None of these descriptors is mutually exclusive.

Example tweets as elicitation devices

Phenomenologically oriented research often uses artifacts to elicit memories and “thick” descriptions from the participant. These are typically material objects such as newspaper articles, photographs, or toys that can help make an experience or practice less abstract. Abildgaard (2018) argues that particularly for researchers who study the everyday use of technology, artifacts can “aid narrative structure” by “prompting participants to follow the story they infer from a particular setup of artifacts” (p. 8). Because I was interested in phenomenological dimensions of Twitter use, I presented the participants with virtual artifacts, in the form of examples of their own tweets.

These example tweets were chosen by me in advance of the interview – often the morning of, so that I could select something they had just tweeted – and presented to the participant during the conversation. I first collected data from the participant's profile and then looked for tweets that had received especially high retweet counts and likes, or that had been sent around a major event. I also tried to find examples of both English-language tweets and tweets in the participant's native language. As discussed with the participants, I would also draw on the Big Data collections to find tweets that had been particularly popular during these events. I typically chose three to six tweets. At a point in the interview when it felt natural, I asked the participant to follow the link to the tweet and explain the reason for the phrasing, use of language (English or native language), or what made them send the tweet. This often elicited interesting stories and insights into the participant's Twitter use. At times it was also revealing when something I found unique about the tweet – such as the way it tied one political event to another – was completely unremarkable to the participant. This technique appeared to help the participant articulate their perspective, by allowing them to focus on a particular example rather than being asked to generalize.

Reflections on interviewing

As mentioned, the interviews were conducted during the early phase of the global COVID-19 pandemic when people were being asked to avoid large gatherings and public spaces. This may have aided the interview process in some ways. For one, the pandemic normalized video conferencing. Twenty-four of the interviews were conducted on Zoom through the University of Oslo's Zoom license agreement. One interview was conducted at the interviewee's request on Google Meet. Another interview was conducted in-person at the University of Oslo, also at the participant's request. Interviews were in English and generally lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. The audio from the interviews was recorded on an unnetworked digital recorder in accordance with the data management plan approved by NSD.

In qualitative interview research, the researcher herself acts as a tool for data collection, so I will reflect here on how I approached the interviewing process. In general, I tried to follow several principles laid out by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 192):

- Strive for short questions with long answers
- Ask follow-up questions and questions of clarification
- Listen to the “emotional message,” not just the words
- Reflect on and interpret the participant's answers
- Vocalize my interpretation, and allow the participant to correct me

In addition, I tried to strike a balance between being the “driver” of the interview, and allowing the participant to direct the flow of conversation. This is where it was useful to have a loosely structured interview guide that did not make me as the interviewer feel wedded to a particular sequence of topics. Instead, I tried to maintain a certain spontaneity of conversation, so that I would be able to follow the participant on unexpected tangents and stories. After the first several interviews, I stopped looking at the guide during the interview. Before wrapping up, I would ask the participant to wait a moment while I flipped through the guide and ensured that we had hit on all the topics.

The participants seemed to find the interviews to be a positive experience. Some had thought about some of the topics we discussed, but many told me that it gave them an opportunity to reflect on Twitter in new ways, and enjoyed the chance to talk about the example tweets I brought up. Thus, while I might have gone in thinking of myself as “interviewer as miner” – extracting knowledge – my role ended up what Brinkmann and Kvale call the “interviewer as traveler,” where knowledge is constructed and coproduced by the interviewer and subject in conversation (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 58). I often broke a kind of fourth wall and would tell a participant who kept veering into other topics, “here's what I'm trying to

get you to talk about.” I also asked nativist-leaning participants to reflect on whether cosmopolitan communication is contradictory to nationalism. And I would reflect on my “working theories” with participants to see what they thought about my impressions of Twitter, political networks, and transnational communication. In this way, I made the participants my “fellow travelers.” I did worry at times about leading the participants to certain responses (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 200). Even their knowing the working title of the project, “Nordic citizens in the ‘global village’: Transnational political participation on social media” (which appeared on the consent form) undoubtedly influenced their answers. However, the topic of global communication is not too far a reach once Twitter is established as the basis of conversation. Ultimately, I believe that involving the participants in the research led to more reflective and fruitful interviews.

Automated and manual transcription

Researchers have different philosophies on how detailed interview transcriptions should be (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 205). I opted for a cleaned-up verbatim approach, in which the transcription does not abridge or paraphrase, but it does omit false starts and “ums” and corrects malapropisms and grammatical errors. (Most participants were not native English speakers.) As Brinkmann and Kvale argue, “oral speech and written texts entail different language games” (p. 204), and I would argue many verbal errors that aren’t noticeable in oral communication can make a speaker look silly or ignorant when written out.

Each interview went through two phases of transcription. First, I used an automated transcription service (NVivo or Amazon AWS) to produce a rough outline of the interview with timestamps. However, computational transcription technology is still being perfected and this transcript was almost gibberish (see Table 7 for a few of the algorithm’s greatest hits), so in the second phase of transcription, I manually revised the transcript while listening back to the interview. This two-phase process took about a third of the time that pure manual transcription takes, while also allowing me to

Table 7. Computer transcription errors

What was said	What the algorithm heard
“And then you have two candidates, age 74 and 78”	“And then you have two cameras set before some gay puppets”
“Okay.”	“Don’t cry.”
“Twitter’s algorithm”	“Twitter’s All Great Men”
“cancel culture”	“cancer cunt culture”

re-listen to the interview, structure the interview into tables of language units (approx. 10-100 words per unit), and perform an initial coding of the units.

Qualitative analytical approach

For the analysis of the qualitative interviews, used in Article 1 and Article 4, I adapted the five-step process described by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, pp. 233–235) and the six-step process described by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, the interviews were read through (performed in phase 2 of transcription as described above). During this process, the interviews were coded with keywords related to the central themes of the interviews, including *audience*, *language*, *globality*, *influence*, and *networks*. Additionally, inductive codes were developed based on the material, including topical codes (*USA*, *Brexit*, *Trump*, *BLM*, *race*, and *covid*) and *anonymity*, *algorithms*, *mainstream media*, *ensorship*, and *harassment*. This provided a basis for the fourth and fifth steps, which were article-specific. In the fourth step, I used the codes to group together and create larger categories of language units. Finally, by looking at these categorized units from the participants, I was able to then develop the themes that form the findings of Article 1 and Article 4. It should be noted this is not a linear process (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86). I would frequently go back to earlier interviews to reread sections and add codes that had emerged through my interpretation of later interviews, thereby deepening my understanding of the material in the hermeneutical tradition (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 238).

Validity, reliability, and generalizability

Validity in research typically refers to measuring what you want to measure, while reliability refers to the ability to find the same results on repeated trials (Neuendorf, 2016, p. 122). These were features I continually assessed throughout the data gathering and analysis process. As Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) write, the point is not “inspection at the end of the production line but quality control throughout the stages of knowledge production” (p. 284) – though validity and reliability have different implications in quantitative and qualitative research settings.

In the case of the Big Data, this included setting up automated checks on the servers being used to gather and store data, taking measures to mitigate for Twitter’s rate limits, and checking for bot activity in my data (Chen et al., 2017 have developed a useful tool) or other highly prolific users that might influence the results. I also performed inter-coder reliability

checks on the political annotation in Article 2 and the content analysis in Article 3. Ensuring validity also meant reflecting on democratic concepts like interaction, participation, and engagement, and considering how they relate to Twitter functions like @mentions and retweeting. In this way, talking with users themselves aided in validation of my Big Data analysis.

With regard to the qualitative interviews, I sought to keep the interviews consistent throughout the process, and treat each participant equally, regardless of elite status or political ideology. I also regularly reflected on my role and the influence that my tone or formulation of a question could have on the answers, as described above. In the analysis – and I would argue this is also relevant to quantitative analysis – I tried to be aware of my own biases and what I “wanted” to find versus what the data was saying. Analysis of all kind requires a series of decisions on the part of the researcher, even if it is simply in the kinds of questions being asked. In summarizing my findings, I tried to remain keenly aware of what Bryman (2003) calls “anecdotalism” (quoted in Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 95), a temptation to identify patterns from a few instances, which I would argue can also occur when interpreting quantitative results.

Generalizability I understand as meaning how well a set of findings about a particular set of data can be applied to a larger population that has not been studied. This study investigates the Scandinavian region, and a particular set of Scandinavians (and perhaps even a particular set of Scandinavian Twitter users). Given the specificities of Twitter previously described empirical findings like the statistics on Scandinavian involvement in the U.S. election are highly specific to this data, though one could imagine that people in other northern European countries took part in similar ways.

However, what the research offers is *analytical* generalizations. That is, the findings do help advance theoretical concepts that apply outside this immediate sample (Yin, 2014, p. 40). I come back to this in the contributions section of the Discussion chapter.

Ethical discussion

Research involving Big Data necessitates doing research on people who have not explicitly given consent to research (Larsson, 2015). Even in a space known to be highly public as Twitter, moving data to a research context threatens what Helen Nissenbaum (2010) has described as the issue of “contextual integrity” of data. That is, even when internet users know their information is public, they may not expect it to be publicized in other formats. I was reminded of how context-specific users may view their tweets by one of the interview participants. During our conversation she remarked that a recent selfie she tweeted had “gotten

into Norwegian Twitter” and suddenly received replies from people she didn’t know. The user is herself Norwegian, but she uses Twitter almost exclusively in English to interact with people outside of Norway. What was meant for one audience and one context was place in another.

Likewise, Boyd and Crawford (2011) remind researchers that users’ data “was created in highly context-sensitive spaces” and researchers “have the tools and the access, while social media users as a whole do not” (p. 11). In the case of the qualitative interviews, I was able to obtain permission from users. However, the Big Data research would not have been possible if I had to obtain permission from all users, and therefore required more ethical reflection. In this regard, I drew on the guidelines developed by the Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees (NESH, 2019), which specifically discuss the use of ostensibly public internet data. The guidelines advise researchers to consider *accessibility in the public sphere* as well as *sensitivity of the information* – and that these are two different spectrums (pp. 9–10). Just because something is public does not mean that it is not sensitive; researchers should consider both the context and content. “There is thus a continuum that ranges from particularly sensitive information revealed in closed online forums to general information published in a public arena targeting a broad audience” (NESH, 2019, p. 10). Particularly difficult is an area the NESH guidelines describe as “the grey zone,” which encompasses sensitive information “published in open Internet forums where it may be less obvious whether this is a public arena or not” (p. 10). I have created a visualization of these guidelines in Figure 12.

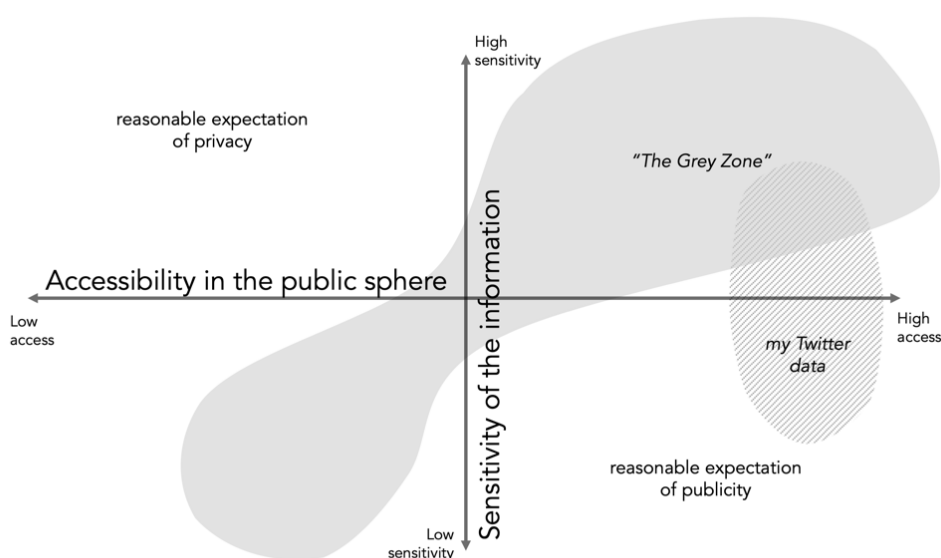


Figure 12. Contextual dimensions of internet data. Adapted from NESH (2019, pp. 9–10).

The NESH guidelines suggest that “political debate in open forums intended for a general audience” – which surely describes public tweets about elections and the COVID pandemic – do *not* fall in this grey zone (p. 10). While this may be true of some of tweets, I would argue – and this is in part based on my interviews – that Twitter data is a bit more complicated. The expectation of publicity varies according to the visibility of the user, the type of tweet, and even the way the person uses Twitter. So, retweeting a news story or replying to Donald Trump might have a high expectation of publicity, even a desire for it. But having a reply to a friend might end up in research might be more unnerving.

Moreover, the E.U.’s General Data Protection Regulation, or GDPR, went into effect shortly after I began the research project, and this law was incorporated into the Norwegian Personal Data Act. Under this law, political opinions *are* considered sensitive data, even when they come from public accounts, and this consideration was made part of my data management plans as approved by NSD. However, as NESH notes, GDPR regulates only the processing of personal data and does not consider the larger issues of “individual integrity and the sanctity of private life” (p. 8).¹ In other words, it does not cover all issues that arise for researchers. Below I describe some of the issues that arose as part of this project and how I tried to balance my responsibility to individual privacy, data laws, the public interest, and academic honesty and transparency.

Informed consent. As described, I obtained consent from the participants in the qualitative interviews. In this consent form, I described the data collection and use, and clarified that the participant would not be identified in presentations or publications unless I explicitly sought permission beforehand. The information letter and consent form were based on the template provided by NSD. However, I rewrote the letter considerably to be in plainer, more accessible English (see Appendix). The users in the Big Data collections I did not seek consent because it would have been prohibitive to the research at hand. I took other steps to ensure their privacy, both in the data management plan as described above, and in the reporting of the data, as described next.

Anonymizing. My general policy is to not use Twitter handles nor to quote tweets verbatim, as this can be easily Googled. Where I provide the text of tweets, I have changed the wording and indicated this to the reader. In rewording a tweet, I try to maintain a comparable tone and style and even similar hashtags. Even so, this practice, in my estimation, is something of an ethical violation itself. As the Italian expression goes, “Traduttore, Traditore” or a

¹ The University of Oslo, for example, uses the standard of “harm to the institution if the information is exposed to third parties.” See: <https://www.uio.no/tjenester/it/sikkerhet/isis/tillegg/lagring/infoklasser.html>

translation is a betrayal (see Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 204). However, I decided this step is necessary to maintain the privacy of the individual while also providing insight into the nature of the tweets. In cases where a tweet is presented in the original form (e.g., Article 1, Figure 3) it is because I have either sought permission from the user, the tweet is no longer available online, or the tweet comes from a public figure.

Identifying users. Most of the Big Data is presented in aggregate. However, in Article 3, I have identified some users with their handles. This decision was made after weighing three factors: 1) the visibility of the user, 2) how the user presents themselves on Twitter, and 3) their level of influence in global flows of information about Sweden. I determined that the users identified had a reasonable expectation of publicity and also that their level of influence was such that there was an academic and public interest in identifying them. I also contacted the users before publication.

Deleted data. Because Twitter's Streaming API provides tweets as they are sent, researchers will inevitably have information in their databases that is no longer publicly available. This raises the question of the researcher's responsibility to respect the deletion of this data. This phenomenon has been noted by researchers who study Twitter (e.g., Bastos & Mercea, 2017, who make deleted data part of their research). Twitter itself asks that researchers remove deleted tweets. However, when dealing with large amounts of data it is not possible to continually check every tweet to see if it is still active – nor, as Bastos and Mercea (2017) argue, is it in the public interest. The results reported in this dissertation therefore include content that has since been deleted – including, as noted, in the 2020 U.S. election. However, even users whose profiles had been removed or deleted received the same privacy protection as those still on the platform.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has described the research approach, methods, and tools used to gather Big Data and qualitative data from interview participants. I have summarized challenges of the process as well as described the steps taken to ensure high standards of validity and reliability. In addition, I have reflected on some of the ethical challenges related to researching huge numbers of online users, such as issues of identifying users and use of deleted data. In the next chapter I provide more information about the data and analytical methods used in each article and the key findings as they relate to cosmopolitan communication.

Summary of the Articles

In this chapter, I provide a short summary of each article, its methods and research aims, and identify the main findings as they relate to the theme of the dissertation. In the Discussion chapter that follows, I draw further connections between the articles and propose a new framework of cosmopolitan communication.

Article 1 – Fungible citizenship: On the internet no-one knows you're a Swede

This article connects the idea of political engagement online with the feature of geographic interchangeability or “fungibility” that the internet provides. I outline the idea of geographic fungibility as making territory and public spheres disconnected from each other, enabling citizens to engage in politics that are ostensibly not their own. The aim of the article is to better understand globality as not just a property of the internet, but as a condition experienced by users themselves. Through a thematic analysis of the 26 interviews, I describe three features of geographic fungibility: *invisibly*, *efficacy*, and *antagonism*. Based on these themes, the article critiques normative models of cosmopolitan citizenship, or “citizens of the world.” It suggests that users instead experience *fungible citizenship*, in which their nation-

state citizenship is still highly relevant to their identity and relationship to political issues, and in fact it gives them passage to politics *anywhere* in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world.

The article connects to recent developments on citizenship theory that are better suited to online culture, particularly “expressive citizenship.” But the article expands the scope of these theories by adding a transnational component. In the context of this dissertation, the article provides a foundation for the articles that follow, by describing the *spatial* orientation of cosmopolitan communication in online platforms that is different from pre-internet and mass media forms of communication, in that users themselves have the capacity to exist in a global space. The article answers RQ1 and to some degree RQ4 in its consideration of the participants’ political ideologies.

The article was published in *Media/Cultural Journal*, an open access peer-reviewed journal published by the Queensland University of Technology. The journal seeks to act as a “a place of public intellectualism” aimed at both academics and popular audiences. Articles go through academic peer review but are expected to be written in a way that is accessible to a reader not familiar with the field. This article appeared in the “Fungible” issue.

Article 2 – Monitorial–cosmopolitans, networked–locals: The case of Scandinavian Twitter engagement with the 2020 US election

In this article, I draw in a *temporal* dimension of communication by looking at a particular event and investigating the way Scandinavian Twitter users spatially engaged with that event. The article uses Big Data collected from final months of the 2020 U.S. presidential. The article seeks to understand an unexplored aspect of election communication – that is, that foreigners can take part in the same way as voters. The article asks 1) how Scandinavian users engaged with the election; 2) the relationship between cosmopolitan communication and ideology, and 3) whether American users engaged with the Scandinavians and ideological makeup of these interactions. Theories of media and citizenship, along with Merton’s local–cosmopolitan model, are translated into to Twitter functions, creating a typology of users based on forms of engagement (monitorial–networked) and its spatial orientation (local–cosmopolitan). The geolocation method described in the Data & Methods chapter is used to develop a list of Scandinavian and American users. Additionally, content analysis techniques are applied to label users’ political orientation and network data is employed to establish

interactions between the Scandinavian and American user groups. The article finds that a plurality of the Scandinavian users fell into the monitorial–cosmopolitan quadrant, followed by networked–locals and networked–cosmopolitans. Both Biden-leaning and Trump-leaning users were both more cosmopolitan than local, though Biden-leaners to a greater degree. However, the Trump-leaning Scandinavian users were overrepresented in the interactions with Americans, with the network analysis indicating that the Trump-leaning communities were particularly interactive and cohesive.

The article contributes a new perspective on global engagement with elections in the digital age, while also challenging the normative assumptions about cosmopolitan communication and its relationship to political ideology. In the context of this dissertation, the article addresses RQ3-a regarding the forms of cosmopolitan communication that digital platforms facilitate and RQ4 on cosmopolitan ideology.

This article was presented at the 72nd Annual ICA Conference in Paris on May 28, 2022, as part of the “One World, Many Discursive Networks” panel.

Article 3 – #MakeSwedenGreatAgain: Media events as politics in the deterritorialised nationalism debate

This article continues in the temporal vein, this time investigating the way a small country’s national election can become deterritorialized. Instead of focusing on users’ forms of interaction with the event, the article examines the content of the tweets themselves, to understand the way the event is interpreted in the global, English-language Twittersphere. My co-author, Gunn Enli, and I use data from the 2018 Swedish national election, in which the right-wing populist Sweden Democrats were expected to make significant gains. We ask 1) what transnational networks formed around this event; 2) what themes these networks spread; and 3) what role the news media played.

The article first uses network analysis to map the different English-language networks that formed around the Swedish event. We next perform a content analysis of samples of tweets (see full codebook and coding instructions in the Appendix). We then mapped the relationships between these codes, as well as their relationship to the network. The article also includes a timeline analysis based on the most retweeted content to identify the role of the news media in driving attention to the election. The article finds that the rise of nationalism was the main theme through which Sweden’s election was viewed, but that this theme was leveraged in different ways by the far-right, British, and mainstream networks. The international news

media was an important driver of attention to the election, yet right-wing commentators and alternative news sites were also influential. Perhaps in part due to the role of the news media in pushing the rise of nationalism narrative, Sweden's election was also leveraged as a critique of global journalism and larger issues of media power.

Conceptually, the article synthesizes literature on media events and transnational activism to contribute to global media events theory. The article illuminates the way cosmopolitan communication is a process of interpretation, in which events are made “portable” through their relationship with politics in other locales. In the context of this dissertation, the article addresses RQ2 events on Twitter, illustrating that events are broken down into different themes by different networks. In response to RQ3b, it finds that shared meaning is created through the process of deterritorialization, and in response to RQ4, it finds that nativist–right communities played a significant role in the circulation of these meanings.

This article was published in the *Nordic Journal of Media Studies*, an open access peer-reviewed journal published by Nordicom at the University of Gothenburg that brings together Nordic, European, and global perspectives on media studies. All issues are thematic, and this article appeared in the issue on “Media events in the Age of Global, Digital Media.”

Article 4 – George Floyd and cosmopolitan memory formation in online networks: A report from northern Europe

In this final article, I investigate the way digital platforms contribute to the formation of cosmopolitan memory around global events, using the qualitative interviews and tweets collected from the participants. The focus of this article was not planned before the interviews. Rather, the subject of George Floyd's death and eruption of attention to the Black Lives Matter movement arose organically due to the contemporaneous timing of the interviews. As a result, the article uses only the 23 interviews done after news of Floyd's death broke. The article investigates how users articulated a collective memory around his death, asking 1) how users express a sense of collective witnessing; 2) what other memories they associate with Floyd; and 3) what strategies of counter-memory formation they employ. Through a thematic analysis of the interviews and tweet data, the article identifies the themes of *cosmopolitan responsibility*, *connection to nation*, *disconnection to nation*, and finally *counter-memory* itself. The article suggests that digital platforms are especially conducive to strategies of “combative counter-memory,” a concept that draws on Foucault's concept of counter-memory, but captures the way

that collective memory formation can be countered in real time via digital platforms. That is, instead of a retroactive rewriting of history, users reflexively aim to participate in its writing.

The article's findings are presented in dialog with previous research on the role of media in collective memory and cosmopolitan memory formation. It contributes to this body of work by offering new insights into the mechanisms through

with cosmopolitan memory forms, in light of the role that digital platforms now play in people's information habits. It also offers a mixed methodological model for combining qualitative and Big Data that can be useful for future studies of Twitter.

The article was published in the *Mediterranean Journal of Communication*, an open access peer-reviewed bilingual journal published by the University of Alicante that focuses on commercial communication, journalism, and advertising. This article appeared in the special issue on "Disinformation and Treatment of Democratic Memory in Social Network." The article is available in English and Spanish.

Summary of article findings

The articles in this dissertation have provided empirical studies of cosmopolitan communication on a digital platform, nuancing the understanding of cosmopolitan communication and its relationship to politics in the digital age. First, in response to RQ1, citizens experience globality on Twitter in sometimes ambivalent ways, but not as detached from the nation-state, and not even experienced as a dichotomy as "glocalization" (Robertson, 1995) or "rooted cosmopolitanism" (Tarrow, 2005) might imply. Rather, in online spaces, their national affiliation is "fungible," or interchangeable with any other – at times an anonymous feeling, but one that reflects the way political information becomes one stream in online spaces.

In response to RQ2, events help create moments of virtual spatial cohesion, by serving as a focus of cross-border communication. Global or foreign events are not accepted as-is but are remixed and reinterpreted – deterritorialized – in different ways by online network. Users

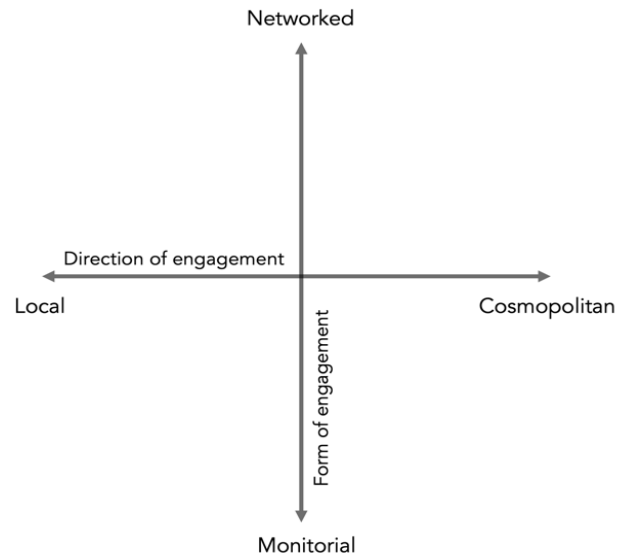


Figure 13. Typology of engagement with global events (see Article 2)

may leverage national events in existing debates, porting the national into international spaces, and into other national contexts again, contributing to shared points of meaning and understandings of common issues (RQ3-b). Regarding RQ3-a, the language of Scandinavians' tweets shows the way that users engage in hybridized spaces that intermingle the local and the cosmopolitan. This communication also appears in different gradations of engagement, ranging from content creation to more monitorial content sharing. (See Figure 13.)

Finally, together the articles challenge a common premise of cosmopolitan communication, namely the tie between cosmopolitan communication and cosmopolitan worldview, or normative cosmopolitanism (RQ4). The articles add evidence to previous work that suggests digital networks are important means of communication for a transnational right (Caiani & Kröll, 2015), particularly those coming from a radical and nativist right-wing ideology. Although these are minorities of the population in the Scandinavian region, users with these views had an outsized presence in transnational networks with the U.S. in the 2020 election. Likewise, global nativist-right communities were especially engaged with the 2018 Swedish election.

In the next chapter I reflect further on the implications of these findings for cosmopolitan theory and its relationship to political communication.

Discussion: Toward a new cosmopolitanism

Flew (2020) has accused scholarship on global media of a certain technological determinism: that global communication would lead to a breakdown of national affiliations and the emergence of cosmopolitan and post-national identities (p. 24). I agree that we should not assume that certain types of communication will produce certain ideological outcomes. However, I challenge the idea that we have not seen the emergence of cosmopolitan identities – at least of a certain sort. In this penultimate chapter, I synthesize the findings produced by this research project, and propose a new model for cosmopolitanism in the digital age called *networked cosmopolitanism*.

Inspired by core elements in Anderson’s (1983) theory of nationalism, this dissertation has examined the concepts of shared space, shared time, shared language, and shared values on global online networks. The empirical articles have demonstrated the ways in which people use the spatio-temporal features of Twitter to respond to events in real time, sharing information, engaging directly with people in other countries, and contributing to the “produsage” (Bruns, 2008) of content.

The bilingual users in this research project help make clear the movements between national and global spheres, though my conversations with them suggest that they see these spaces as largely interchangeable. More importantly, shared language also entails the creation of shared meanings. Like the process of “domestication” engaged in by the news media

(Robertson, 2010), the Twitter users engage in their own acts of interpretation, both particularizing the universal and universalizing the particular (Octobre, 2020; Robertson, 2010). Sweden's 2018 election was not only about Sweden, for example, but also about a vote on the first-past-the-post system in British Columbia, Canada; the editorial decisions of the BBC; and so-called demographic replacement across the European continent. These hybridizations help create shared vocabularies of politics on a transnational level. And in this regard, the users may resemble Hannerz's (2007) foreign correspondents, as both cosmopolitans themselves, and agents of cosmopolitanism as they bring the world to local contexts.

Users may not be world citizens appealing to a global public sphere or supranational bodies, but I suggest that cosmopolitanism as consciousness of global connection has also been demonstrated (Hannerz, 2007). We see the formation of cosmopolitan networks built on ideological connections over geographic connections during the American presidential race, and a sense of international solidarity over the death of George Floyd. Even those who are critical of the Black Lives Matter movement find shared community in this with people in other countries. Such users may not subscribe to moral cosmopolitanism (and indeed they would be offended to be accused of that), but nevertheless they engage in a formation of global "we"-ness. That is, they see the importance of global connection, and the interlinkage of causes across boundaries.

Is this the cosmopolitanism that theorists had in mind? No. Cosmopolitanism was seen as an antidote to nationalism (Delanty, 2006, p. 44; Hannerz, 2006, p. 10; Reese, 2011, p. 79). For Hannerz (1990), cosmopolitanism was an outlook or an impulse that embraced compassion, human rights, and peacefulness. For him, the mystery was what set of practices helped people arrive at this stance (p. 301). In this dissertation, I have taken the opposite approach; I have examined those who engage in a set of cosmopolitan practices – cross-border communication – and investigated these practices and asked what outlook they have. The findings demonstrate that the processes of cosmopolitan communication are not path dependent on a particular political ideology; engagement with the Other and recognizing cross-border solidarities is not unique to a cosmopolitanism that values universal rights and generous immigration policies.

I suggest that if we take cosmopolitanism as a set of practices, then it never was the antidote to nationalism. If we want to take cosmopolitanism seriously as an analytical concept, I argue we should consider it as a spectrum in the same way we view nationalism. Like nationalism and national identity, which can be associated with a range of ideologies – liberal,

illiberal, conservative, authoritarian, fascist – cosmopolitanism as well can be associated with a variety of ideological bents (Calhoun, 2007). In that spirit, I propose a new concept of cosmopolitanism for the digital age.

Proposing *Networked Cosmopolitanism*

This concept builds on Beck's theory of cosmopolitanization (2006; 2011), which he proposed was the condition of a constant awareness of the world through blending of the local, national, and international in contemporary life, not the least through media. Among Beck's central arguments – and indeed, one that is borne out in my data – is that cosmopolitanization can in fact reinforce feelings of nationalism and isolationism, even as it creates interconnection (2011, p. 1352). Beck (2006) writes that nationalism, in seeking to establish the lines of the nation–state, is “an attempt to fix the blurred and shifting boundaries between internal and external, us and them” (p. 4). In fact, he proposed that those opposed to globalization may in fact take advantage of globalized communication in the process of fighting it (2006, p. 111).

Indeed, as found in the empirical material in this dissertation, as in previous studies, nationalist movements may paradoxically seek solidarities and exchange information with likeminded people across boundaries, even while advocating for stronger national borders and firm contours of national identity (Caiani, 2018). Like left-wing movements reacting to shared challenges of economic or environmental globalization, right-wing movements also see shared challenges stemming from globalization. In this sense, nationalist movements become cosmopolitanized as well (p. 101). “Cosmopolitanization is not the ‘dichotomous other’ of nationalism,” writes Beck (2011, p. 1352). It “does not want to replace the national” (p. 1357). And in this way, many findings in this dissertation are in concert with Beck's cosmopolitanization.

However, I disagree with Beck in three important regards. First, cosmopolitanization, as opposed to cosmopolitanism, is a coerced condition for Beck. Essentially, you can either be a *cosmopolitan* or be a *victim* of cosmopolitanization (2011, p. 1349; 2006, p. 101). This *-ization/-ism* dichotomy continues to imply a normative hierarchy of cosmopolitanisms, and moreover cosmopolitanization takes away the agency that people have in their own chosen interactions with the world. The studies in this dissertation are based on digital trace data – data that are only available because an individual user has made a communicative choice.

The second area in which I take a different view is not so much a disagreement with Beck as what I see as an omission. While Beck's theory addresses the everyday encounters individuals have with the world – their “sense of boundarylessness” (2006) – his descriptions

of *political* cosmopolitanism are generally pointed at institutional level phenomena (p. 33). Political cosmopolitanism is related to organizations, global risk, and international relations, while “social” or “banal” cosmopolitanism is oriented around practices of consumption. In this regard he is not alone. As discussed in Chapter 3, literature on political cosmopolitanism often deals with meso- and macro-level processes. Beck (2011) does gesture at new communication technologies and “imagined communities of global risk” – which sound a lot like digital networks – but he does not deal explicitly with the capacities of user-to-user digital platforms for individual-level political communication.

Finally, Beck argues that cosmopolitanization is changing the relationship that people have to their nation-state. He writes that

behind the facade of enduring nationality, processes of transnationalization are everywhere taking place. And it is precisely the extension of power into the transnational domain that makes possible a redefinition of the national cores behind the facade of nation-state continuity. (2006, p. 64)

In other words, national identities are becoming more superficial or perfunctory, and understandings of power are moving to a non-territorial level (2011, p. 1355).

In my reading of the material presented in this dissertation, the academic literature, and the global political climate in recent years, national identities and government structures remain an important source of security and understandings of power. Therefore, I offer a new concept, developed specifically for political communication in online media. Networked cosmopolitanism is a way of seeing the world as a political whole and ways of making connections within it. The features of networked cosmopolitanism are as follows:

User-to-user digital networks. Cross-border communication is embedded in personalized networks. These networks combine the features of engagement with durable text so that people may engage in cross-border communication along a spectrum of forms, from simple reading and observation, to creating their own content and engaging in back-and-forths with other people. This results in the formation of common understandings of politics, shared language, and shared space. Users from different locations interact with one another, often responding to major events and bringing people together in a shared time. This fosters a sense of unity across borders and a shared experience.

Individual-focused political cosmopolitanism. Unlike previous theories of political cosmopolitanism, which focus on the role of institutions and organizations in fostering global cooperation and understanding, networked cosmopolitanism emphasizes a more bottom-up and decentralized form of political cosmopolitanism. Individuals take part in the interpretation of

events in ways that make them meaningful outside their original context, contributing to the deterritorialization of politics and the development of cross-border movements.

Banality of mediated politics. Networked cosmopolitanism acknowledges that engagement with political events and ideas from other countries can be as subtle and unnoticeable as consuming food, clothing, music, and other cultural products from other countries. Political cosmopolitanism need not be a conscious and deliberate act of citizenship, but rather can emerge organically from everyday activities and interactions. Distinctions between local and global may go largely unnoticed, contributing to geographically hybrid politics, though people continue to identify nations as the seat of power.

Ideologically agnostic. Cosmopolitan practices do not necessarily create nor depend on a cosmopolitan moral outlook. While they indeed embody a *world-view* that acknowledges global connections and shared fate, they remain flexible regarding political ideology. Like Anderson's (1983) image of the newspaper reader knowing that he is sharing the same experience with other strangers, cosmopolitan communication contributes to an *awareness* of simultaneous existence (p. 33). But just as people who share a national imagined community may disagree about politics, networked cosmopolitans do not necessarily share opinions on human rights, immigration, supranational organizations, or climate change.

To further make the point about the difference between cosmopolitan practices and cosmopolitan moral attitudes, I will include a couple of vignettes from the qualitative interviews. These come from discussions about the World Values Survey question about world citizenship, which I included at the end of every interview (see Figure 10). One of the findings that this produced was that “world citizen” was not a particularly fruitful way of describing people (Szerszynski and Urry also have an interesting discussion of this point, 2002, p. 472). In effect, the question produced answers that appeared to be completely at odds with what previous scholars would suggest.

‘So I’m a world citizen’

The first example comes from an interview with one of the nativist-right participants. She frequently shared anti-immigration news stories and commentary, and had even been asked by Twitter to remove tweets. Eventually she was removed from the platform. I was therefore surprised when she answered “strongly agree” to the statement “I see myself as a world citizen.” The participant explained:

I am travelling the world. I'm in Greece. I'm in Denmark. I'm in Norway. I'm in Thailand. I have a [job] where I can work from everywhere in the world. So I'm a world citizen. But, I want Thailand to be Thailand, Denmark to be Denmark, Norway to be Norway, and Greece to be Greece.

The participant could make a case that she meets Tomlinson's description of a cosmopolitan as having "a grasp of the legitimate pluralism of cultures" (1999, p. 194). She splits her time between southern Europe and Norway and feels at home in both. During the 2015 so-called migrant crisis when people fleeing Syria and other countries crossed the Mediterranean, the participant was distraught by the local effects in Greece. She is not guilty of a mere "tourist gaze" (Urry, 1992). In fact, much like the cosmopolitan–local symbiosis that Hannerz (1990) described, the participant would argue that she *does* value diversity, and wants to maintain it. Though the participant's attitudes toward migration is starkly at odds with most descriptions of moral cosmopolitanism, for her, she was upholding a moral obligation to the world, and her Twitter use was part of that obligation.

'I'm a world citizen because of not belonging anywhere'

While the above participant had earned the status of citizen of the world in her eyes, several of the participants with immigrant backgrounds described accepting this status reluctantly. One participant told me yes, he was a "world citizen" because he was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

and then I've been raised in Sweden. So in that way ... I would say I'm a world citizen. Because I have a feeling of not belonging anywhere. I can't say that I'm a Swede. I *am* a Swede, but I've never looked like a Swede, a typical Swede. I don't feel like a Congolese, but I'm a biological Congolese. ... I feel very alien in the world today. That's just how it is.

The participant, who frequently posted about crimes by immigrants to Sweden, said he didn't like the concept of a world citizen. To him it symbolized a lack of connection and moral obligation to people.

'Not to be rude, but that sounds very white'

Meanwhile, I received another answer from a Palestinian participant who had come to Scandinavia as a refugee. He started using Twitter during the Arab Spring and has amassed a sizeable following on Twitter, including prominent journalists and politicians. He responded

bluntly when I administered the World Values Survey question to him: “Not to be rude, but that sounds very white,” he said. The participant explained:

It’s a difficult question for me, because on the one hand, I’m stateless. And when I say I’m stateless, people say, “Hey, you’re a world citizen!” But I’m like, “Yeah, try coming with me to the bank or to an immigration point.”

The participant pointed out that being a world citizen already assumes a national identity – that you have citizenship somewhere and have elected to level up. This is not the first time the privilege associated with cosmopolitanism has been pointed out (Hafez, 2007, p. 6; Hannerz, 2005, p. 121). In many ways, the participant who lives part-time in Greece is like the nationalistic Danish traveler Beck encountered (2006, pp. 4–5). Hannerz (1990) meanwhile has noted that people can be cosmopolitans without accepting the term (e.g., migrants, p. 241).

I bring up these examples, however, to problematize some of the assumptions of cosmopolitanism. As described in some of the normative approaches to cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitanism is an idealized goal that can be measured by how people understand their affiliations and moral obligations to the world (Hannerz, 1990; 2005; Norris & Inglehart, 2009; Robertson, 2010). Yet as evidenced by the answers above, this is a complex question, and one that people may not even be able to answer themselves. All of these participants would be labeled “world citizens” in the World Values Survey, yet it would tell us little about their actual values. Ultimately, universalistic moral values are an admirable goal, but cosmopolitanism as a practice and an orientation to the world has arrived, and is highly relevant to how at least some people interact with politics, though it may not produce the political outcomes that earlier scholars hoped for.

Implications of cosmopolitan communication: Uniting or dividing?

This dissertation has focused on the communicative practices and perspectives of individual Twitter users and the networks that they form in. While the research does not directly address the political effects of these practices, we can make certain inferences about the implications of the findings for democratic discourse. I would suggest that one of the implications of this dissertation is that cosmopolitan communication may not always be *a good thing*.

But let’s back up for a moment.

Much cosmopolitan literature suggests that at a time when disease, extremism, migration, and economic and ecological disaster highlight the global nature of risks, people are more

compelled to recognize their connection with people in other countries (Beck, 2011; Linklater, 2002; Nussbaum, 1994), and therefore feel less bound to a national sense of community (Sassen, 2002). Moreover, an increasing number of influential entities are international, transnational, or supranational in nature; this can be governmental entities such as the WTO, non-governmental organizations such as Doctors Without Borders, or (perhaps most importantly) private companies like Apple, Facebook, and Google. As Fraser (2007) writes, the “all-affected” principle of legitimate political participation adds to the justification that citizens of one nation should be able to involve themselves in the politics of another.

Norris and Inglehart (2009) argue that in contemporary society “one of the relevant issues is how citizens can organize collectively in civil society and have their voices heard in multilateral organizations beyond the boundaries of the nation-state” (p. 8). This is perhaps a tall order (see Fraser, 2007). But even if cosmopolitan communication does not result in a “dispersed global civicness” (Szerszynski & Urry, 2002, p. 471), it may still have bearing on the national context. Connections to global conversations contribute to the “narrative resources” that people use in their ontological constructions (Octobre, 2020).

However, narrative resources from abroad may at times be out of sync with the national context. In Article 4, some participants describe a disconnect between the American racial and policing context and the Scandinavian one. The Scandinavian countries have very different demographic and political histories from the United States, and application of American politics on top of the Scandinavian one may, as one participant explains, result in the masking of other issues. On the other hand, other participants described their fears that far-right communities in parts of Scandinavia were adopting culture war vernacular from the United States, and recirculating misinformation and conspiracy theories from American Twitter users.

Another problem I see is that it is not entirely clear how to define the Other online. In this dissertation I have operationalized Hannerz’s straightforward definition – “a willingness to engage with the Other” as communication that crosses national boundaries. The Other is meant to be someone who is different, who challenges your views, who even makes you uncomfortable, who is Alien to you (Christensen & Jansson, 2015; Hannerz, 2005). However, as mentioned, the difference between the global and the national is becoming so seamless – so banal – that many people may not much care anymore if someone is from Sweden or Japan. More important – and this is evidenced in both the Big Data and interview data – is that they have the same views as you do. The good news and bad news may be that political interests and ideologies have triumphed over shared nationality. That is, the Other is not someone from another country, but rather, someone from another place on the political spectrum.

In interviews with participants, I repeatedly heard an expression of “we” as referring to “we who oppose fascism” or “we who are fighting the elites.” Volkmer (2010) suggests that transnational political discourse is “constantly oscillating between imaginations of ‘otherness’ and ‘we’-ness” (p. 54). The findings here I believe support this assessment. This raises the question: How much is cosmopolitan communication expanding people’s horizons, and how much is it satisfying their preconceived opinions on a global scale? I don’t want to overstate the existence of so-called echo chambers and filter bubbles (Bruns, 2019), but it is worth considering how digital platforms may be contributing to affective polarization and new forms of “us vs. them” (Iyengar, 2012). In other words, I would caution that the new forms of unity, identity, and shared understandings that cosmopolitan communication fosters should be evaluated on their own merits.

Main contributions

Theoretical. This dissertation contributes to media studies by offering a new interpretation of cosmopolitan theory as it relates to media, backed by empirical data. Although cosmopolitan engagement by individuals is often associated with cultural consumption (books, movies, music, etc.), global news and journalism are another important means of engagement with the Other (Hänska, 2018; Kyriakidou, 2009; Norris & Inglehart; Reese, 2011; Robertson, 2010). Alexa Robertson (2010) suggests that mediated cosmopolitanism entails both a political and cultural engagement with the world (pp. 7-8). This dissertation takes mediated a step further, placing it in the context of personalized, digital networks and the way individuals practice cosmopolitan communication on these platforms.

The dissertation contributes to the concept of networked cosmopolitanism. This concept captures an individual-focused political cosmopolitanism. Importantly, this concept distinguishes cosmopolitan practices from moral cosmopolitan outcomes. Networked cosmopolitanism draws on Beck’s (2006) theory of cosmopolitanization but diverges from it in recognizing the agency that platform users take in how they engage with the world and Others in it.

In addition, individual articles contribute to expanding the understanding of political communication and citizenship studies by providing a transnational dimension to these fields, including through the concepts of fungible citizenship and combative counter-memory, a typology of engagement in global events, and the application of Tomlinson’s deterritorialization to digital networks. The findings on the 2020 American presidential race and the 2018 Swedish parliamentary election also contribute to the literature on election

communication, by providing empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks for foreign involvement in national contents, in both large and small countries.

Methodological. This dissertation uses Big Data in combination with qualitative interviews to empirically investigate the use of technologies. This method considers both the aggregated practices of users as well as the intentions and rationales behind these practices, providing a more holistic understanding of digital media. Such methods can be applied to not just Twitter, but other digital platforms, streaming services, app use, and other personalized technologies.

Empirical. This dissertation has also documented and quantified the use of Twitter in the Scandinavian region to engage transnationally in the 2020 American presidential race, as well as the use by global Twitter networks to engage transnationally in the 2018 Swedish parliamentary election, and captured the understandings that users have of the death of George Floyd. These findings help illuminate the way that citizens in the Scandinavian countries become part of American public spheres, acting not just as media consumers but as participants in online discourses. Such findings contribute to understandings of the influence of American political cultures in Scandinavian countries, not just at the elite level (Karlsen, 2013) but at the citizen level. Moreover, the findings provide evidence for claims that Sweden has become a symbol in online debates about immigration.² These findings can be useful for studies into areas such as place branding and political polarization, and can also help policymakers better understand the political environments in which citizens consume information.

Reflections on generalizability, limitations, and future research

Twitter and Twitter users in Scandinavian countries offer a kind of ideal prototype for cosmopolitan communication research, by making the capacity for certain practices highly visible, particularly due to their bilingual nature. Scandinavian Twitter, in other words, offers almost a “friction-free space” for studying cosmopolitanism. Twitter was used intentionally here as a platform that is especially conducive to cosmopolitan communication and research on it. Even so, I would argue that certain features of Twitter – the ability to share spaces with people in other countries, to produce and respond to content, and react to political news and events – are shared on enough digital online networks that the concept of networked cosmopolitans can be generalized to other platforms. I can imagine that we could find

² Christensen, C. (2017, April 14). Why rightwingers are desperate for Sweden to ‘fail’. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/apr/14/rightwingers-sweden-fail-terrorists>

individual-level, banal, ideologically various forms of political cosmopolitan communication in Facebook groups, Instagram stories, subreddits, and TikTok comment fields, as well as closed group chats and other arenas that are more difficult to study. Future research thus could nuance cosmopolitanism against the technical specificities of different platforms, as well as the specific culture and demographic that populate it.

That said, the empirical material used here is not representative of people in general. The ideal of the globally connected web is severely hindered by enduring – and in places, worsening – restrictions on access to digital information (Ragnedda & Muschert, 2017). The ability of people living in the Global South in particular to participate in cross-border networks is hindered by poor access and digital illiteracy (Norris, 2001; The World Bank, 2020) – people who would have a lot to contribute to discussions of climate change, economic inequality, immigration, and authoritarianism.

In fact, one thing I have been particularly bothered by in this research project is the immense focus on European and, most of all, American politics in my empirical material. Naturally, this is partially due to my choice to track American and Swedish elections, and also to the selection of Twitter, which Schünemann (2020) found tends to be dominated by American politics and media. Moreover, Scandinavians have regional and cultural reasons to take an interest in Europe and North America. Knowing this, I tried to identify people whose cross-border communication was aimed outside of these regions, including by looking at users in Scandinavia who tweeted in Turkish, Arabic, and Portuguese. I also tried to identify more diverse subnetworks in the Covid-19 dataset, a truly global event. These efforts helped me develop a more diverse pool of interview participants, but even for participants with ties to the Global South, American politics – and Donald Trump – were strong pulls. North–South/East–West connections have been an important part of the visions for cosmopolitan communication. For me, the lopsided geographic nature of the empirical material raises questions for future research about what topics and what people are being left out of the community of networked cosmopolitanism. Or, as described by Ghemawat (2016), we may see something more akin to regionalization than globalization, with networked cosmopolitans occupying separate regional and linguistic spheres.

The future of Twitter and other global-ish spaces

In addition to the generalizability of the findings to spaces besides Twitter, there is also the question of how much the findings are generalizable to *Twitter itself*. It may also be that the data gathered represents not only a certain set of users and a certain platform, but a certain time

– both in the world and the life of a platform. The period of data collection from Twitter includes the presidency of Donald Trump and the coronavirus pandemic, periods in which more people joined Twitter (Leetaru, 2019; 2021). So, this may have been a kind of “perfect storm” of cosmopolitan communication; as previous scholars emphasize, and as I have noted in this dissertation, there is a temporal, and even liminal aspect of cosmopolitan communication (Lim, 1998; Robertson, A., 2010; Skey, 2013).

Yet this may have also been a special time for other reasons. As of this writing, the billionaire Elon Musk has acquired Twitter and turned it private. He is enacting a series of changes that could fundamentally change the technical structure and culture of the platform. Musk has said he wants to make the platform more democratic and less elite-driven, including by ending the previous verified (“blue check”) system. He has also allowed previously banned accounts, including Donald Trump’s, back onto the platform. It is not clear how successful this will be. Some signs suggest the platform is gaining users (Kemp, 2023). Unfortunately, it may be difficult to track communication on the platform in the future because Twitter has also announced it is discontinuing its free APIs, including those commonly used for academic research (Coalition for Independent Technology Research, 2023).

Beyond Twitter, I also wonder if advancements in technology and global politics could be turning digital platforms into less global spaces. Algorithms and artificial intelligence could make social media *even more* personalized than they already are, while regional privacy laws and licensing agreements could further limit what is available where. (Musk’s Twitter may be in violation of European content moderation rules, for example [Fung, 2022].) In addition, global politics have prompted even democratic countries to move toward technology bans. The E.U. has restricted access to Russian media, and many technology companies have pulled out of the country, following the invasion of Ukraine. The United States, meanwhile, is considering a ban on TikTok over concerns about its Chinese ownership.

Thus, we could see greater hurdles for cross-border communication in the future, if politicians show increasing willingness to restrict access. But on the other hand, it may be equally probable that such measures become the topic *du jour* for the networked cosmopolitans in the new places that they gather.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Sixty years ago, Marshall McLuhan proposed the idea of the “global village,” created through electronic mass media. The term has been used to describe the ways globalization and media technology have changed transnational commerce, institutions, and culture. Yet McLuhan’s description of the global village was not made in an era when everyone could have their own broadcast channel. The findings of this dissertation demonstrate that we are now at a point where we should think about what technology means for the ability of individuals – the villagers themselves – to communicate in global spaces. Perhaps it is no longer fruitful to talk of a “global village” so much as the hybrid space, time, and language, constructed by the networked cosmopolitans who are navigating a combination of local somewheres and global anywheres.

Using a combination of Big Data gathered from Twitter and qualitative interviews with users in the Scandinavian region, this dissertation has taken an empirical approach to cosmopolitan communication. Through a series of four articles that use a combination of network analysis, quantitative content analysis, qualitative thematic analysis, and other methods, it contributes to the understanding of the way digital networked platforms are used for cross-border communication. Focusing on the themes of shared space, shared time, shared

language, and shared values, articles demonstrate that cosmopolitan communication does not necessarily create “citizens of the world” in the normative sense, but a cosmopolitanism that is nevertheless oriented toward the shared fate of the world, expressed through digital networks. The concept of networked cosmopolitanism captures the new forms of global political understanding that are emerging, characterized by individualized communication. “Global” politics may become banalized, appearing casually in everyday digital interactions, in the same way that cultural products from afar are now commonplace. Moreover, cosmopolitan communication may be practiced by those with anti-cosmopolitan tendencies. Overall, the findings suggest that the world can easily become integrated into modern political engagement in online networks, contributing to a new constancy of global connection.

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The Articles

1. Robinson, J. Y. (2022). Fungible citizenship: On the internet no-one knows you're a swede. *Media/Culture Journal*, 25(2). <https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.2883>
2. Robinson, J. Y. (2022, May 28). *Monitorial–cosmopolitans, networked–locals: The case of Scandinavian Twitter engagement with the 2020 US election*. Presented at the 72nd Annual ICA Conference, Paris, France. [Manuscript in process of submitting for publication.]
3. Robinson, J. Y., & Enli, G. (2022). #MakeSwedenGreatAgain: Media events as politics in the deterritorialised nationalism debate. *Nordic Journal of Media Studies*, 4(1), 56-80. <https://doi.org/doi:10.2478/njms-2022-0004>
4. Robinson, J. Y. (2022). George Floyd and cosmopolitan memory formation in online networks: A report from northern Europe. *Mediterranean Journal of Communication*, 13(2), 185-199. <https://doi.org/10.14198/medcom.21834>

Article 1

Robinson, J. Y. (2022). Fungible citizenship: On the internet no-one knows you're a swede. *Media/Culture Journal*, 25(2). <https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.2883>



Fungible Citizenship

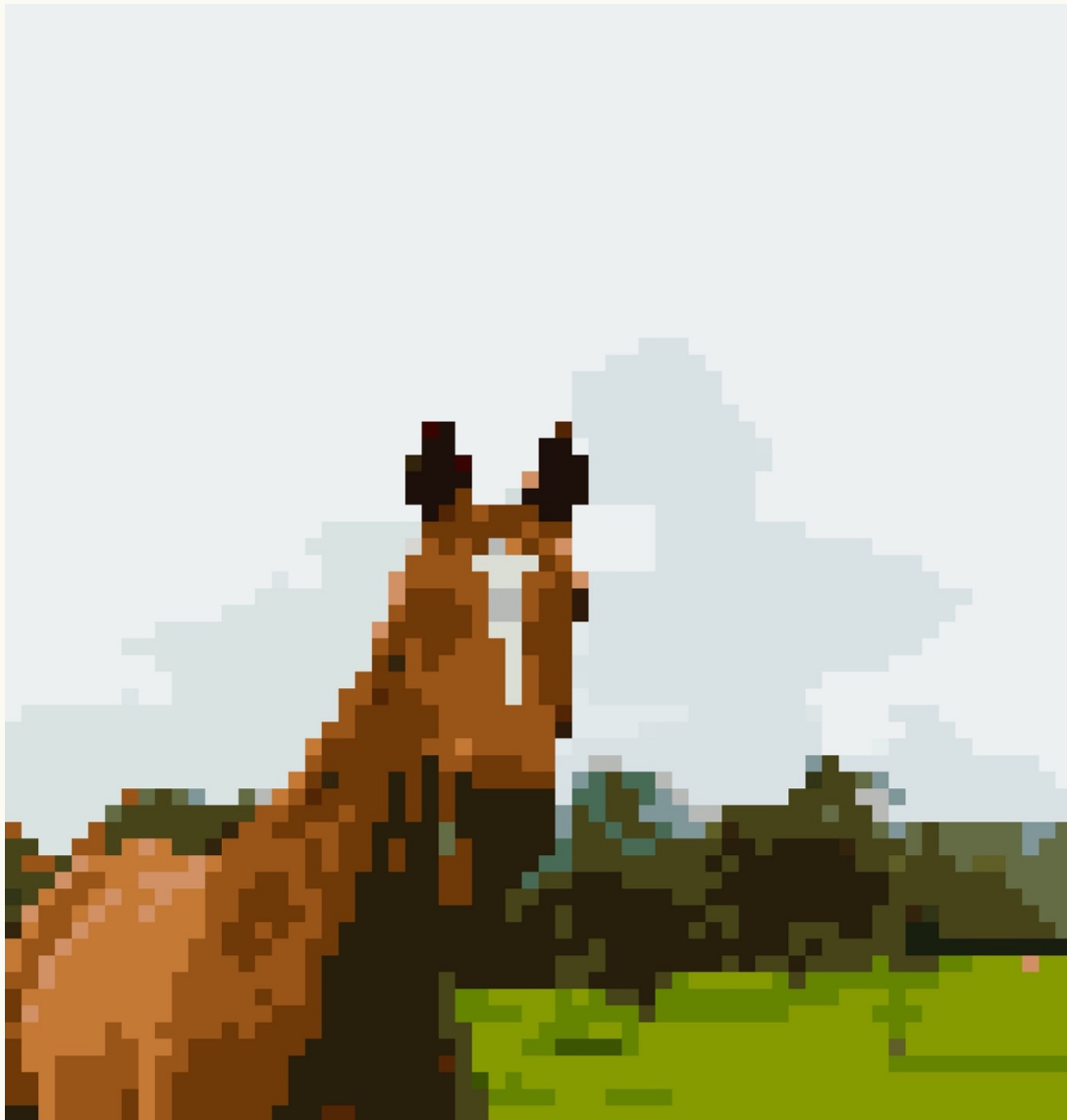
On the Internet No-One Knows You're a Swede

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[Vol. 25 No. 2 \(2022\): fungible](#)

Articles

Social media companies like to claim the world. Mark Zuckerberg says Facebook is “building a global community”. Twitter promises to show you “what’s happening in the world right now”. Even Parler claims to be the “global town square”.

Indeed, among the fungible aspects of digital culture is the promise of geographic fungibility—the interchangeability of location and national provenance. The taglines of social media platforms tap into the social imagination of the Internet erasing distance—Marshall McLuhan’s global village on a touch screen (see fig. 1).

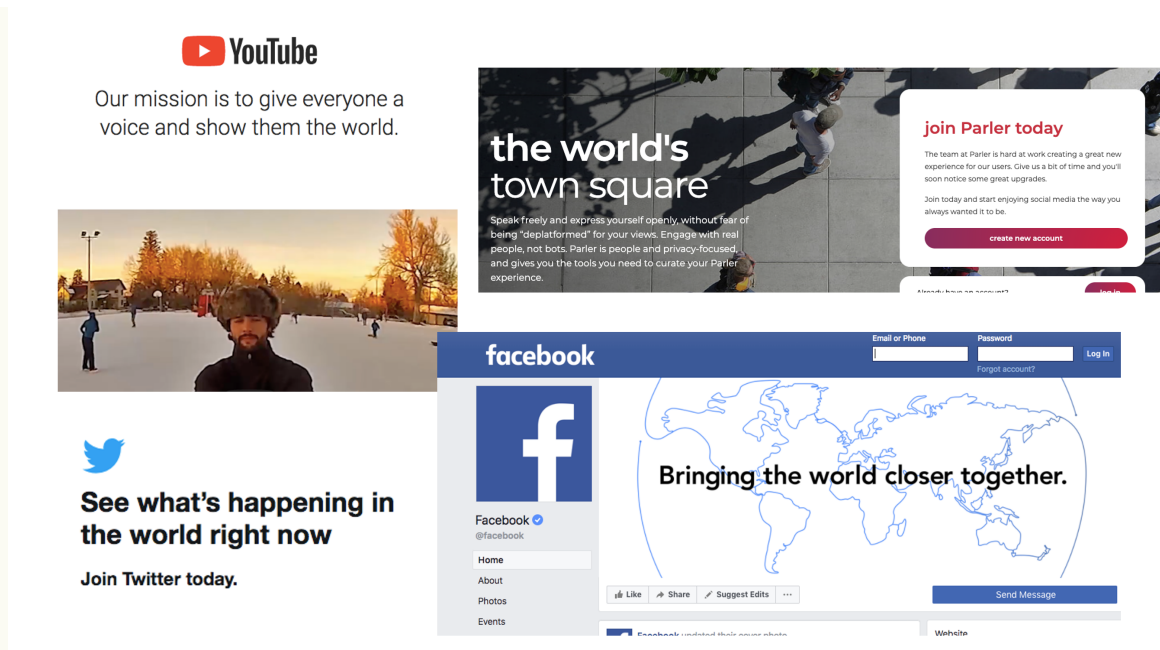


Fig. 1: Platform taglines: YouTube, Twitter, Parler, and Facebook have made globality part of their pitch to users.

Yet users' perceptions of geographic fungibility remain unclear. Scholars have proposed forms of cosmopolitan and global citizenship in which national borders play less of a role in how people engage with political ideas (Delanty; Sassen). Others suggest the potential erasure of location may be disorienting (Calhoun). "Nobody lives globally", as Hugh Dyer writes (64).

In this article, I interrogate popular and academic assumptions about global political spaces, looking at geographic fungibility as a condition experienced by users. The article draws on interviews conducted with Twitter users in the Scandinavian region. Norway, Sweden, and Denmark offer an interesting contrast to online spaces because of their small and highly cohesive political cultures; yet these countries also have high Internet penetration rates and English proficiency levels, making them potentially highly globally connected (Syvertsen et al.).

Based on a thematic analysis of these interviews, I find fungibility emerges as a key feature of how users interact with politics at a global level in three ways: *invisibility*: fungibility as disconnection; *efficacy*: fungibility as empowerment; and *antagonism*: non-fungibility as strategy. Finally, in contrast to currently available models, I propose that online practices are not characterised so much by cosmopolitan norms, but by what I describe as fungible citizenship.

Geographic Fungibility and Cosmopolitan Hopes

Let's back up and take a real-life example that highlights what it means for geography to be fungible. In March 2017, at a high-stakes meeting of the US House Intelligence Committee, a congressman suddenly noticed that President Donald Trump was not only following the hearing on television, but was [live-tweeting](#) incorrect information about it on Twitter.

"This tweet has gone out to millions of Americans", said Congressman Jim Himes, noting Donald Trump's follower count. "16.1 million to be exact" ([C-SPAN](#)).

Only, those followers weren't just Americans; Trump was tweeting to 16.1 million followers *worldwide* (see Sevin and Uzunoğlu). Moreover, the committee was gathered that day to address an issue related to geographic fungibility: it was the first public hearing on Russian attempts to interfere in the 2016 American presidential race—which occurred, among other places, on Twitter.

In a way, democratic systems are based on fungibility. *One person one vote. Equality before the law.* But land mass was not imagined to be commutable, and given the physical restrictions of communication, participation in the public sphere was largely assumed to be restricted by geography (Habermas).

But online platforms offer a fundamentally different structure. Nancy Fraser observes that “public spheres today are not coextensive with political membership. Often the interlocutors are neither co-nationals nor fellow citizens” (16). Netflix, YouTube, K-Pop, #BLM: the resources that people draw on to define their worlds come less from nation-specific media (Robertson 179). C-SPAN’s online feed—if one really wanted to—is as easy to click on in Seattle as in Stockholm. Indeed, research on Twitter finds geographically dispersed networks (Leetaru et al.). Many Twitter users tweet in multiple languages, with English being the lingua franca of Twitter (Mocanu et al.). This has helped make geographic location interchangeable, even undetectable without use of advanced methods (Stock).

Such conditions might set the stage for what sociologists have envisioned as cosmopolitan or global public spheres (Linklater; Szerszynski and Urry). That is, cross-border networks based more on shared interest than shared nationality (Sassen 277). Theorists observing the growth of online communities in the late 1990s and early 2000s proposed that such activity could lead to a shift in people’s perspectives on the world: namely, by closing the communicative distance with the Other, people would also close the moral distance. Delanty suggested that “discursive spaces of world openness” could counter nationalist tendencies and help mobilise cosmopolitan citizens against the negative effects of globalisation (44).

However, much of this discourse dates to the pre-social media Internet. These platforms have proved to be more hierarchical, less interactive, and even less global than early theorists hoped (Burgess and Baym; Dahlgren, “Social Media”; Hindman). Although ordinary citizens certainly break through, entrenched power dynamics and algorithmic structures complicate the process, leading to what Bucher describes as a reverse Panopticon: “the possibility of constantly disappearing, of not being considered important enough” (1171). A 2021 [report](#) by the Pew Research Center found most Twitter users receive few if any likes and retweets of their content. In short, it may be that social media are less like Marshall McLuhan’s global village and more like a global version of Marc Augé’s “non-places”: an anonymous and disempowering whereabouts (77–78).

Cosmopolitanism itself is also plagued by problems of legitimacy (Calhoun). Fraser argues that global public opinion is meaningless without a constituent global government. “What could efficacy mean in this situation?” she asks (15). Moreover, universalist sentiment and erasure of borders are not exactly the story of the last 15 years. Media scholar Terry Flew notes that given Brexit and the rise of figures like Trump and Bolsonaro, projections of cosmopolitanism were seriously overestimated (19).

Yet social media are undeniably political places. So how do we make sense of users’ engagement in the discourse that increasingly takes place here? It is this point I turn to next.

Citizenship in the Age of Social Media

In recent years, scholars have reconsidered how they understand the way people interact with politics, as access to political discourse has become a regular, even mundane part of our lives. Increasingly they are challenging old models of “informed citizens” and traditional forms of political participation. Neta Kligler-Vilenchik writes:

the oft-heard claims that citizenship is in decline, particularly for young people, are usually based on citizenship indicators derived from these legacy models—the informed/dutiful citizen. Yet scholars are increasingly positing ... citizenship [is not] declining, but rather changing its form. (1891)

In other words, rather than wondering if tweeting is like a citizen speaking in the town square or merely scribbling in the margins of a newspaper, this line of thinking suggests tweeting is a new form of citizen participation entirely (Bucher; Lane et al.). Who speaks in the town square these days anyway?

To be clear, “citizenship” here is not meant in the ballot box and passport sense; this isn’t about changing legal definitions. Rather, the citizenship at issue refers to how people perceive and enact their public selves. In particular, new models of citizenship emphasise how people understand their relation to strangers through discursive means (Asen)—through talking, in other words, in its various forms (Dahlgren, “Talkative Public”). This may include anything from Facebook posts to online petitions (Vaughan et al.) to digital organising (Vromen) to even activities that can seem trivial, solitary, or apolitical by traditional measures, such as “liking” a post or retweeting a news story.

Although some research finds users do see strategic value in such activities (Picone et al.), Lane et al. argue that small-scale acts are important on their own because they force us to self-reflect on our relationship to politics, under a model they call “expressive citizenship”. Kligler-Vilenchik argues that such approaches to citizenship reflect not only new technology but also a society in which public discourse is less formalised through official institutions (newspapers, city council meetings, clubs): “each individual is required to ‘invent themselves’, to shape and form who they are and what they believe in—including how to enact their citizenship” she writes (1892).

However, missing from these new understandings of politics is a spatial dimension. How does the geographic reach of social media sites play into perceptions of citizenship in these spaces? This is important because, regardless of the state of cosmopolitan sentiment, political problems *are* global: climate change, pandemic, regulation of tech companies, the next US president: many of society’s biggest issues, as Beck notes, “do not respect nation-state or any other borders” (4). Yet it’s not clear whether users’ correlative ability to reach across borders is empowering, or overwhelming.

Thus, inspired particularly by Delanty’s “micro” cosmopolitanism and Dahlgren’s conditions for the formation of citizenship (“Talkative Public”), I am guided by the following questions: how do people negotiate geographic fungibility online? And specifically, how do they understand their relationship to a global space and their ability to be heard in it?

Methodology

Christensen and Jansson have suggested that one of the underutilised ways to understand media cultures is to talk to users directly about the “mediatized everyday” (1474). To that end, I interviewed 26 Twitter users in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden. The Scandinavian region is a useful region of study because most people use the Web nearly every day and the populations have high English proficiency (Syvertsen et al.).

Participants were found in large-scale data scrapes of Twitter, using linguistic and geographic markers in their profiles, a process similar to the mapping of the Australian Twittersphere (Bruns et al.). The interviewees were selected because of their mixed use of Scandinavian languages and English and their participation in international networks. Participants were contacted through direct messages on Twitter or via email. In figure 2, the participants’ timeline data have been graphed into a network map according to who users @mentioned and retweeted, with lines representing tweets and colours representing languages.

The participants include activists, corporate consultants, government employees, students, journalists, politicians, a security guard, a doctor, a teacher, and unemployed people. They range from age 24 to 60. Eight are women, reflecting the gender imbalance of Twitter. Six have an immigrant background. Eight are right-leaning politically. Participants also have wide variation in follower counts in order to capture a variety of experiences on the platform (min=281, max=136,000, median=3,600, standard deviation=33,708). All users had public profiles, but under Norwegian rules for research data, they will be identified here by an ID and their country, gender, and follower count (e.g., P01, Sweden, M, 23,000).

Focussing on a single platform allowed the interviews to be more specific and makes it easier to compare the participants’ responses, although other social media often came up in the course of the interviews. Twitter was selected because it is often used in a public manner and has become an important channel for political communication (Larsson and Moe).

The interviews lasted around an hour each and were conducted on Zoom between May 2020 and March 2021.

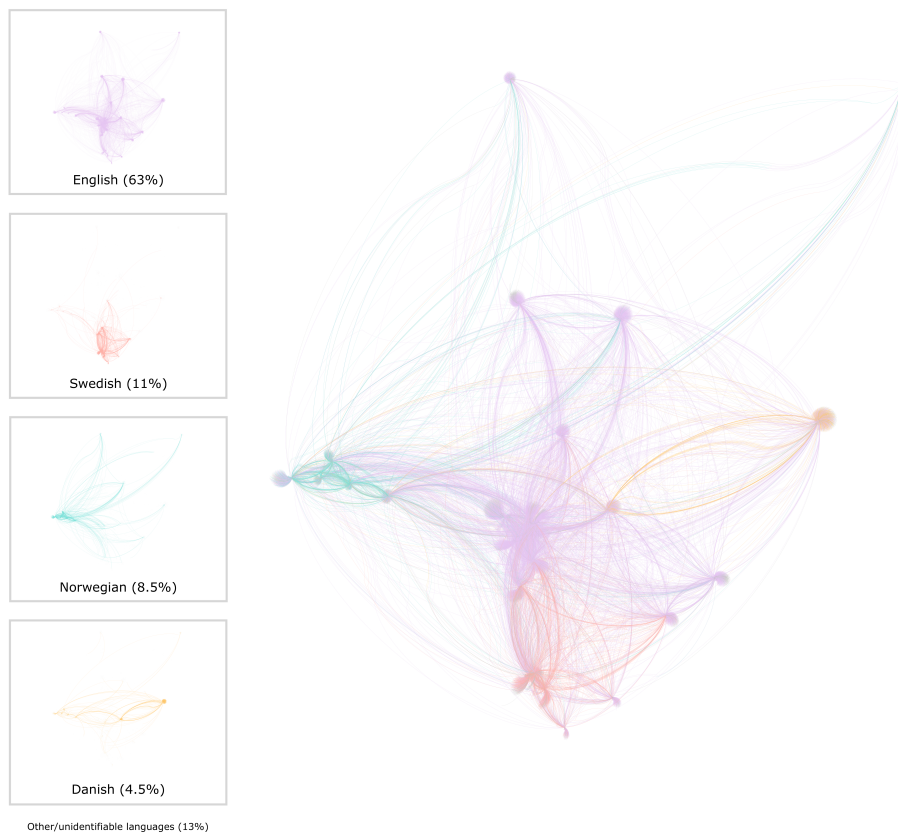


Fig. 2: Network map of interview participants' Twitter timelines.

Invisibility: The Abyss of the Global Village

Each participant was asked during the interview how they think about globality on Twitter. For many, it was part of the original reason for joining the platform. "Twitter had this reputation of being the hangout of a lot of the world's intellectuals", said P022 (Norway, M, 136,000). One Swedish woman described a kind of cosmopolitan curation process, where she would follow people on every continent, so that her feed would give her a sense of the world. "And yes, you can get that from international papers", she told me, "but if I actually consumed as much as I do on Twitter in papers, I would be reading papers and articles all day" (P023, Sweden, F, 384).

Yet while globality was part of the appeal, it was also an abstraction. "I mean, the Internet is global, so everything you do is going to end up somewhere else", said one Swedish user (P013, M, 12,000). Users would echo the taglines that social media allow you to "interact with someone half a world away" (P05, Norway, M, 3,300) but were often hard-pressed to recall specific examples.

A strong theme of invisibility—or feeling lost in an abyss—ran throughout the interviews. For many users this manifested in a lack of any visible response to their tweets. Even when replying to another user, the participants didn't expect much dialogic engagement with them ("No, no, that's unrealistic".) For P04 (Norway, F, 2,000), tweeting back a heart emoji to someone with a large following was for her own benefit, much like the *intrapersonal* expressions described by Lane et al. that are not necessarily intended for other actors. P04 didn't expect the original poster to even see her emoji.

Interestingly, invisibility was more of a frustration among users with several thousand followers than those with only a few hundred. Having more followers seemed to only make Twitter appear more fickle. "Sometimes you get a lot of attention and sometimes it's completely disregarded" said P05 (Norway, M, 3,300). P024 (Sweden, M, 2,000) had essentially given up: "I think it's fun that you found me [to interview]", he said, "Because I have this idea that almost no one sees my tweets anymore".

In a different way, P08 (Norway, F) who had a follower count of 121,000, also felt the abstraction of globality. “It’s almost like I’m just tweeting into a void or into space”, she said, “because it’s too many people to grasp or really understand that these are real people”. For P08, Twitter was almost an anonymous non-place because of its vastness, compared with Facebook and Instagram where the known faces of her friends and family made for more finite and specific places—and thus made her more self-conscious about the visibility of her posts.

Efficacy: Fungibility as Empowerment

Despite the frequent feeling of global invisibility, almost all the users—even those with few followers—believed they had some sort of effect in global political discussions on Twitter. This was surprising, and seemingly contradictory to the first theme.

This second theme of empowerment is characterised by feelings of efficacy or perception of impact. One of the most striking examples came from a Danish man with 345 followers. I wondered before the interview if he might have automated his account because he replied to Donald Trump so often (see fig. 3). The participant explained that, no, he was just trying to affect the statistics on Trump’s tweet, to get it [ratioed](#). He explained:

it’s like when I’m voting, I’m not necessarily thinking [I’m personally] going to affect the situation, you know. ... It’s the statistics that shows a position—that people don’t like it, and they’re speaking actively against it. (P06, Denmark, M, 345)

Other participants described their role similarly—not as making an impact directly, but being “one ant in the anthill” or helping information spread “like rings in the water”. One woman in Sweden said of the US election:

I can’t go to the streets because I’m in Stockholm. So I take to their streets on Twitter. I’m kind of helping them—using the algorithms, with retweets, and re-enforcing some hashtags. (P018, Sweden, F, 7,400)

Note that the participants rationalise their Twitter activities through comparisons to classic forms of political participation—voting and protesting. Yet the acts of citizenship they describe are very much in line with new norms of citizenship (Vaughan et al.) and what Picone et al. call “small acts of engagement”. They are just acts aimed at the American sphere instead of their national sphere.

Participants with large followings understood their accounts had a kind of brand, such as commenting on Middle Eastern politics, mocking leftist politicians, or critiquing the media. But these users were also sceptical they were having any direct impact. Rather, they too saw themselves as being “a tiny part of a combined effect from a lot of people” (P014, Norway, M, 39,000).



Team Trump @TeamTrump · 19h
COUNT ALL LEGAL VOTES!

1.1K 9.7K 65.8K

They did.

Take a nap

9.7K 65.8K



Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump · Nov 16
I WON THE ELECTION!

Multiple sources called this election differently

264.8K 325.4K 717.2K

This is what you do to people:



New Day @NewDay · Nov 16

A South Dakota ER nurse @JodiDoering says her Covid-19 patients often "don't want to believe that Covid is real."

"Their last dying words are, 'This can't be happening. It's not real.' And when they should be... Facetiming their families, they're filled with anger and hatred."



Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump · Nov 16
They will PACK THE COURTS. We won't let that happen!

36.9K 51.3K 343.2K

Irrelevant. Either you win or loose.

This time you loose

36.9K 51.3K 343.2K

Fig. 3: Participant P06 replies to Trump.

Antagonism: Encounters with Non-Fungibility

The final theme reflects instances when geography became suddenly apparent—and thrown back in the faces of the users. This was often in relation to the 2020 American election, which many of the participants were following closely. "I probably know more about US politics than Swedish", said P023 (Sweden, F, 380). Particularly among left-wing users who listed a Scandinavian location in their profile, tweeting about the topic had occasionally led to encounters with Americans claiming foreign interference. "I had some people telling me 'You don't have anything to do with our politics. You have no say in this'" said P018 (Sweden, F, 7,400).

In these instances, the participants likewise deployed geography strategically. Participants said they would claim legitimacy because the election would affect their country too. "I think it's important for

the rest of the world to give them [the US] that feedback. That 'we're depending on you'" said P017 (Sweden, M, 280).

As a result of these interactions, P06 started to pre-emptively identify himself as Danish in his tweets, which in a way sacrificed his own geographic fungibility, but also reinforced a wider sense of geographic fungibility on Twitter. In one of his replies to Donald Trump, Jr., he wrote, "Denmark here. The world is hoping for real leader!"

Conclusion: Fungible Citizenship

The view that digital media are global looms large in academic and popular imagination. The aim of the analysis presented here is to help illuminate how these perceptions play into practices of citizenship in digital spaces. One of the contradictions inherent in this research is that geographic or linguistic information was necessary to find the users interviewed. It may be that users who are geographically anonymous—or even lie about their location—would have a different relationship to online globality.

With that said, several key themes emerged from the interviews: the abstraction and invisibility of digital spaces, the empowerment of geographic fungibility, and the occasional antagonistic deployment of non-fungibility by other users and the participants. Taken together, these themes point to geographic fungibility as a condition that can both stifle as well as create new arenas for political expression. Even spontaneous and small acts that aren't expected to ever reach an audience (Lane et al.) nevertheless are done with an awareness of social processes that extend beyond the national sphere. Moreover, algorithms and metrics, while being the source of invisibility (Bucher), were at times a means of empowerment for those at a physical distance. In contrast to the cosmopolitan literature, it is not so much that users didn't identify with their nation as their "community of membership" (Sassen)—they saw it as giving them an important perspective. Rather, they considered politics in the EU, US, UK, Russia, and elsewhere to be *part* of their national arena.

In this way, the findings support Delanty's description of "changes within ... national identities rather than in the emergence in new identities" (42). Yet the interviews do not point to "the desire to go beyond ethnocentricity and particularity" (42). Some of the most adamant and active global communicators were on the right and radical right. For them, opposition to immigration and strengthening of national identity were major reasons to be on Twitter. Cross-border communication for them was not a form of resistance to nationalism but wholly compatible with it.

Instead of the emergence of global or cosmopolitan citizenship then, I propose that what has emerged is a form of *fungible citizenship*. This is perhaps a more ambivalent, and certainly a less idealistic, view of digital culture. It implies that users are not elevating their affinities or shedding their national ties. Rather, the transnational effects of political decisions are viewed as legitimate grounds for political participation online.

This approach to global platforms builds on and nuances current discursive approaches to citizenship, which emphasise expression (Lane et al.) and contribution (Vaughan et al.) rather than formal participation within institutions. Perhaps the Scandinavian users cannot cast a vote in US elections, but they can still engage in the same forms of expression as any American with a Twitter account. That encounters with non-fungibility were so notable to the participants also points to the mundanity of globality on social media. Vaughan et al. write that "citizens are increasingly accustomed to participating in horizontal networks of relationships which facilitate more expressive, smaller forms of action" (17). The findings here suggest that they are also accustomed to participating in geographically agnostic networks, in which their expressions of citizenship are at once small, interchangeable, and potentially global.

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#MakeSwedenGreatAgain

Media events as politics in the deterritorialised nationalism debate

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Abstract

Online networks have blurred the lines between national and global news, and have given users a more active role in how information flows. This opens up the opportunity for individuals to engage with foreign events in new ways, curating information and offering their own interpretations. In this article, we investigate how national elections are taken up in the global Twittersphere, using a set of 198,635 English-language tweets about the 2018 Swedish parliamentary election. Based on a network analysis and a content analysis of themes in the tweets, we demonstrate that national media events can become “deterritorialised” by globally networked publics. A second key finding is that the Swedish election is leveraged to discuss anti-globalist themes such as immigration and nationalism in, paradoxically, a global and deterritorialised context.

Keywords: transnationalism, nationalism, media events, themes analysis, networks, Twitter

Introduction

The Swedish national election on 9 September 2018 has been called one of the most controversial campaigns in Swedish history (Wixe & Ek, 2018). It was the first parliamentary election after the 2015 “migrant crisis” in Europe, when Sweden took in among the highest numbers of refugees relative to population (Traub, 2016), and polls predicted record results for the far-right nativist-populist Sweden Democrats (SD) in 2018. Although SD’s nearly 18 per cent vote share was less than anticipated, it was still striking for a party that only a decade ago claimed a small fringe of the Swedish electorate (Statistics Sweden, 2018) and established SD as one of the country’s major parties (Oscarsson & Strömbäck, 2019: 325). In international coverage, the election was taken as a sign of the growing strength of nationalist politics – they could take hold “even in Sweden!” As *Time* magazine

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explained it, “Our utopian image of Sweden [...] seems impervious to the kinds of dramatic political cleavages and populist insurgents that have swept the U.S. and much of Europe in recent years” (Nugent, 2018: para. 1).

Media research on Sweden’s election has largely focused on the domestic public sphere, with particular attention to the growing strength of right-wing online actors and alternative media (Larsson, 2020; Sandberg & Ihlebæk, 2019; Schroeder, 2020). Some research on the Swedish election and social media has discussed international interest in the election. Researchers at the LSE Institute of Global Affairs released a report in October 2018 titled *Smearing Sweden: International Influence Campaigns in the 2018 Swedish Election* (Colliver et al., 2018), which included English-language tweets. In the authors’ assessment, the far-right was responsible for a smear campaign aimed at spreading information to “tarnish Sweden’s reputation among international audiences” (Colliver et al., 2018: 5). They note Sweden has become a “narrative crux” in far-right discourse. Yet it is notable that the researchers also found that although “amplification tactics were observed [...] there was no evidence that they were coordinated or internationally managed” (Colliver et al., 2018: 6), implying not so much a campaign as a general interest among foreign Twitter users.

With this as a starting point, we examine how foreign media events construct, and are constructed by, transnational Twitter audiences. Although foreign events might lack the monopolising force that media sociologists Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (1992) originally described in their concept of media events, we consider Hepp and Couldry’s (2010: 10) contention that these events may nevertheless be experienced as “thickenings” – thickenings of attention and meaning, varying in strength in different territories, and produced by both mass media (press, television, and radio) and by online networks. Rather than examine an overtly global event, we choose as our case study a national election, a classic example of a media event intended for a geographically bound polity. This allows us to better examine how globalised digital media lead media events to, in the words of Dayan and Katz (1992: 15) “create their own constituencies”. We adapt Tomlinson’s (1999) concept of deterritorialisation to the online world, using it to describe the way global constituencies interpret, remix, and transfer national politics to new cultural contexts.

Empirically, we use a corpus of English-language tweets collected in real time during the 2018 election campaign and its aftermath. Drawing on both media events theory and the literature on political networks on social media, we pose the following questions: 1) What transnational networks formed on Twitter around the Swedish national election? 2) What themes did these networks spread? and 3) What was the role of the news media in creating moments of thickening among Twitter users? Together, these questions contribute to a better understanding of how audiences deterritorialise politics and political events on global social media platforms. In the following section, we explore previous research on media events, global media events, and transnational communication on social media.

Media events and the Twittersphere

The notion of a media-constituted “public” has long been a central concept in cultural, political, and media studies. In Anderson’s (1983) *Imagined Communities*, the daily ritual of newspaper reading built connections between strangers. Dayan and Katz (1992) helped further conceptualise how *events*, depicted through media, could bring people together in sudden ways, as witnesses in a collective “we”. Applying the Durkheimian notion of material ritual, Dayan and Katz focused on the aesthetics of three genres of media events: coronations, contests, and conquests. One of the most analytically explored since is the contest, defined as “the ceremonies of sports and politics”, and characterised by a high-stakes competition in which “the rules are well known [and] the form is familiar” (Dayan & Katz, 1992: 31). Quintessential examples of contests are sporting events and elections – including party conventions, live debates, and election-night returns (see Dayan & Katz, 1992: 26, 239). At times, this has been a point of criticism, as modern campaign coverage has become focused on the horserace dimension of elections, making politics into an entertainment spectacle, and reducing the policy aspects (Kellner, 2010; Matthews et al., 2012).

In the age of social media and Big Data, computational methodologies have taken understanding of these events to new levels. Researchers have found that conventions, debates, and election-night returns are periods of high Twitter traffic, as audiences live-tweet about the candidates and root for their party (Larsson & Moe, 2016; Robertson et al., 2019), forming networks through interactions. In recent years, researchers have contributed other models of media events that focus more on the role of audiences in shaping the event, such as conflictual media events (Hepp & Couldry, 2010; Mortensen, 2015) and media event chains (Sreberny, 2016).

Among the main threads in these developments is a challenge to Dayan and Katz’s implication that media events are top-down phenomena, where audiences accept messages as intended, or even experience the event as one audience. Particularly in the case of elections and other contest-style phenomena, media events may put more emphasis on partisanship and societal division than on unity. In contrast to a mass-media based *public*, scholars of social media emphasise multiple *publics* existing in a more fragmented and interest-driven media environment (Bruns & Burgess, 2011). Bruns and Burgess (2011) characterise formations around events on Twitter as ad hoc publics, reflecting the spontaneous, liminal, and self-selected nature of these new publics (see also Bruns & Highfield, 2016). Hepp and Couldry argue there is an inherent tension in modern media events. On the one hand, a media event requires a top-down “thematic core” to be integrative, but it is also subject to a bottom-up, “everyday appropriation” by audiences (Hepp & Couldry, 2010: 12). This tension may be especially taut when audiences witnessing the event do not share a common citizenship or territory. “We would argue”, Hepp and Couldry (2010: 12) write, that “media events in a global-transcultural

frame open the space for the construction and reconstruction of many different constructions of a common ‘we’.

Revisiting his own concept in 2010, Dayan described a kind of meta-contest that now takes place within media events: “In the *contest for ownership*, media events lend themselves to a rich grammar of appropriations. They fall prey to entities that are neither their organizers nor their publics [emphasis added]” (Dayan, 2010: 30). He observes that media events can be used as Trojan horses for different politically motivated meanings. We suggest that the notion of media events as Trojan horses is especially relevant in the context of a national election, and in particular an election in which immigration is a central topic (Oscarsson & Strömbäck, 2019: 329). In the Swedish public sphere, immigration was supplemented by issues such as environment, employment, education, the economy, and welfare state programmes (Petrarca et al., 2019; Sandberg et al., 2019). However, the question we seek to explore is what issues were salient in the *transnational* interpretation of the election, in order to highlight what characterises political media events in the age of social media.

Deterritorialisation and global media events

Written before the arrival of social media platforms, John Tomlinson’s *Globalization and Culture* (1999) captured the sense of transformation in the relationship between place and culture as experienced in global modernity. Drawing on Canclini (1995), he referred to the experience of globalisation of culture as a condition of deterritorialisation, in which the location we inhabit has less bearing on our experiences and identities. While Tomlinson was primarily interested in cultural objects, such as food and entertainment, he also considered the role of events in the news: “People probably come to include distant events and processes more routinely in their perceptions of what is significant for their own personal lives” (Tomlinson, 1999: 115). Hepp and Couldry (2010: 10) suggest this concept could be useful in the study of media events in the twenty-first century, when geographic territory is no longer an accurate proxy for the territoriality of media.

The idea of media events moving beyond the nation-state was always embedded in the concept. Dayan and Katz (1992: 16) hinted at the possibility, writing that broadcasting allows media events to talk “over and around conventional political geography”. Taking up this thread, Hallin and Mancini (1992) examined television coverage of Cold War-era US–Soviet summits. The scholars observed that journalists used “we” in the broadcasts not to refer to inhabitants of their home country, but to describe humanity as a whole – contributing, the scholars argued, to a sense of global community. More recent studies have examined the unifying nature of other international events as experienced through globalised media, including ritual international competitions like the Olympics (Roche, 2002) and Eurovision (Kyriakidou et al., 2018); ceremonies like the D-Day anniversary (Robertson, 2010); and conflicts like the Danish cartoon controversy (Eide et al., 2008).

One of the persistent findings of this research is that “global” media events do not have the totalising, world-encompassing force implied by the name. Even seemingly identically witnessed events like the Olympics or live commemorations – or perhaps we should say especially these events – are subject to “domestication” through coverage by national media outlets (Clausen, 2004; Eide et al., 2008; Frandsen, 2003; Robertson, 2010). Sreberny (2016: 3500) observes that global media events are typically not experienced simultaneously at all, but through a “deterritorialized assemblage of contemporary event chains”, thanks in part to the way digital media allow events to be experienced on the user’s schedule. However, scholars argue a sense of immediacy remains, and that furthermore (as Tomlinson suggested), global media platforms help establish transnational reference points among geographically dispersed audiences. Volkmer and Deffner (2010: 218), drawing on interviews across nine countries, argue that a transnational “eventsphere” is emerging, in which events are increasingly viewed in terms of their global meaning.

Reviewing the literature on global media events, we find that the concept generally has been applied to either 1) planned mega-events, or 2) unplanned conflictual events that gain international attention. Mega-events, as defined by Roche (2002), are large-scale events in the original Dayan and Katz mould, but organised internationally, such as the Olympics, Eurovision, and world summits. Conflictual events, like the Charlie Hebdo killings or the Danish cartoon controversy, are generally unanticipated local occurrences that have resonance beyond their original geographic context and are deemed global. What is not clear from these two strands of literature is how, given a digital media environment that facilitates rapid deterritorialisation and an emerging transnational eventsphere, *ritual* media events might break out of their intended sphere and reach new constituencies.

Thus, we seek to offer a third perspective, maintaining Dayan and Katz’s concept of a media event as anticipated, but exploring the creation of unanticipated audiences. Drawing on Tomlinson’s (1999) concept of deterritorialisation, we examine an ostensibly national media event from the contest genre: a national election campaign. Unlike conflictual events, these are planned rituals with established rules familiar across many countries. Yet, unlike global mega-events, elections are not designed for a global audience. Rather, these events are witnessed ad hoc by international observers through globally available platforms. And such events arguably have real or perceived stakes for audiences elsewhere, as they incorporate them into their own phenomenological worlds (Tomlinson, 1999).

Additionally, this helps fill a gap in the understanding of elections. Despite wide intercultural familiarity with the patterns of election campaigns, the increased digitisation of the public sphere, and the tendency of these events to cast the audience in a participatory role, little research has so far addressed the globalisation of national elections (for a couple of exceptions, see Cheng & Chen, 2016; Sevin & Uzunoğlu, 2017). Research in this vein more often focuses on government-backed “foreign interference” campaigns (Blackwill & Gordon, 2018; Bradshaw & Howard, 2018; Colliver et al., 2018) and “cyber warfare” (Singer

& Brooking, 2018). Our approach instead brings in the citizen-oriented tradition found more often in social movement research. As we discuss in the next section, this approach views digital technology as giving users new ways of participating in the global flow of information.

Social movements, Twitter, and international nationalism

Much of the scholarship on transnational communication on social media comes out of social movement research, starting with the pivotal Arab Spring protests and uprisings. While popular imagination has painted these events as birthed by a global Twittersphere, scholars argue the relay of foreign movements from one cultural context to another is much more complex. Foreign events do not transfer unchanged from one cultural context to another; rather, they have resonance because audiences reshape foreign issues, transposing them or plugging them into other geographies and power struggles (della Porta & Diani, 2006). Lim (2018: 112) has developed the concept of portability to capture the way events on the ground are distilled into archetypes and symbols that transcend the local context and “evoke shared emotion” in far-away others.

Such a process can be seen in globally visible movements like The Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, and #metoo; each are rooted in unique events, but became portable on Twitter through universalised enemies and simplified themes of democratic freedom, wealth, race, and gender. In part due to such movements, Twitter is viewed by scholars as an important platform for connecting audiences and offering them a “front row seat” to events (Jackson et al., 2020). More than traditional news media, Twitter allows users to not only witness an event, but to witness others’ witnessing of it. Empirical research also demonstrates that Twitter tends to facilitate cross-border networks more than Facebook (Ghemawat, 2016), and though Twitter contains many domestic language communities, English is by far the most used language: Scholars suggest it has become a kind of lingua franca of transnational networks (Hänksa & Bauchowitz, 2019; Mocanu et al., 2013).

Due in part to the cosmopolitan associations with global polyglot audiences, much research on transnational social movements has focused on left-wing causes. However, scholarship has been shifting as a result of the recent rise of openly right-wing nationalist discourse in many countries (Bieber, 2018; Bob, 2012). Davey and Ebner (2017: 23) found in an analysis of the German hashtag #Merkelmussweg [#Merkel has to go] that 38 per cent of the geotagged tweets came from outside Germany. Grumke (2013: 50) suggests the shared enemies of globalism and global elites provide an ideological unity among what he calls an “international of nationalists”. While empirical research does not point to widespread online coordination among established groups and parties on social media, there is evidence that nativist messages – and especially anti-immigration and anti-Islam messages – have transnational portability in online networks (Caiani & Kröll, 2015; Froio & Ganesh, 2018).

Data and methodology

Data collection

Tweets were collected between 10 August and 28 September 2018 from Twitter's real-time Streaming API using the DMI-TCAT (Digital Methods Initiative Twitter Capture and Analysis Toolset) (Borra & Rieder, 2014). This time period begins a month before election day (9 September) and runs until three weeks after, during which a post-election "crisis" over government formation unfolded. The keywords used were "election", "elections"; "vote", "voter", "voters"; "party", and "parties" – paired with "Swedish" and "Sweden". Any combination of these words (regardless of letter case) anywhere in the tweet (including as a hashtag) qualified the tweet for collection by the TCAT. Using keywords to collect data from the Streaming API can run into a rate limit that Twitter imposes on free data collection (Sloan & Quan-Haase, 2017). This rate limit caps data to around 1 per cent of the entire Twitter stream; queries that would otherwise return more tweets therefore miss an unknown number of tweets. We therefore chose focused keywords and do not believe the data was subject to this limit, based on the number of tweets collected and the rate limit alert feature of the DMI-TCAT. As part of the data processing, we also checked for signs of bot activity using tweet metadata (Bovet & Makse, 2019) and the tool Botometer (Yang et al., 2019), which suggested automated accounts had minimal impact (~5% of users).

In total, our English-language keywords resulted in a combined dataset of 198,635 unique tweets, sent by 91,797 users (an average of 2.2 tweets per user). Almost all of the tweets were in English (98%), followed by Swedish (0.6%), and French, Romanian, and undetermined languages (each with 0.2%).

In addition to the English-language tweets, we also collected tweets containing #svpol, #val18, and #val2018 (abbreviations for "Swedish politics" and "Election 2018", also used by Colliver et al., 2018; Petrarca et al., 2019). This returned 221,686 tweets in Swedish. This Swedish-language data serves as a point of reference when examining temporal patterns in the English-language data and understanding moments of thickening.

Subnetwork identification

As noted by Bruns and Burgess (2011), Twitter is not a single social network, but a series of smaller subnetworks, around which users group based on shared interests. According to social network theory, information flows faster within subnetworks than across subnetworks (Himmelboim et al., 2017). These subnetworks, also called communities and clusters, can be detected algorithmically by identifying groups of nodes (users) who have more ties (tweets) with each other than with other users (Blondel et al., 2008). We use Blondel and colleagues' modularity class algorithm in the network analysis software Gephi (run at 2.0 resolution) to identify the largest subnetworks in the full English-language data collection. We then qualitatively characterise

these subnetworks based on the most prominent users (those who received the most retweets and @mentions).

Coding scheme

Einspänner and colleagues (2014: 103) have suggested using an “iterative and cyclical process” to create coding schemes for Twitter data. In that vein, we developed the coding scheme 1) deductively, based on known topics in the Swedish election (Petrarca et al., 2019) and themes from the literature on media events, transnational communication, and social movements (particularly Froio & Ganesh, 2018; Jost et al., 2018; Lim, 2018; Volkmer & Deffner, 2010), and 2) inductively, based on themes we discovered in the data.

The coding scheme was developed as follows. We began with a list of expected themes. We then conducted what Neuendorf (2002: 103) calls a “qualitative scrutiny of a representative subset”, where the two authors independently examined a random selection of the data. Some of the deductively established themes were also prevalent in the tweets, such as immigration, nationalism, and horserace aspects, as well as users comparing Sweden to their own local or national context. However, we discovered that many themes we expected to find (e.g., economy, education, and women) were scarce or nearly absent from the sample. In addition, we wrote down repeated themes we did not expect, such as “speculations of election fraud” and “critique of sensationalist coverage”.

Based on our initial review, we then drafted a coding scheme that combined the inductively and deductively developed themes. This coding scheme went through three rounds of testing. In each round, the two authors independently hand-coded a sample of the same 100 tweets and an intercoder reliability test was run to see if we had the same findings. After each round, themes were added, removed, changed, or refined. The final coding scheme and intercoder reliability scores for each theme are listed in Table 1.

All themes are based on manifest content (Neuendorf, 2002); however, we allow tweets to be labelled with as many themes as apply, since we found, as Sandberg and Ihlebæk (2019: 435) did, that themes often overlap. We also coded for thematic content that was more a mode of expression, such as rooting for a winner (Rooting) or comparing Sweden to other countries (GlobalPolitics), while others are more traditional election issues (Violence, WelfareState, Environment). This is another reason it was important to allow codes to overlap. The analysis of these overlappings became essential to understanding the data, as we will describe in the “Findings” and “Discussion” sections.

Sampling

Two random samples from the full English-language dataset were hand-coded. The first is a population random sample – that is, it samples all tweets in the collection. We term this the PopRand sample ($n_{\text{PopRand}} = 5,000$). The occurrences of each theme

in this sample are listed in Table 1. Reflecting the collection as a whole, many of these were retweets. In order to make comparisons between original tweets that were sent and those that were amplified, we also coded a random sample of non-retweets ($n_{\text{non-RT}} = 1,000$). Both samples were taken using the sample function in the pandas library in Python (pandas, n.d.).

Table 1 Coding scheme

No.	Theme	Description	Intercoder reliability	Occurrence
1	NationalistRise	The tweet puts emphasis on the success or expected success of SD in the election.	.820	1,256
2	Horserace	The tweet puts emphasis on updates of who is winning and losing, including poll results, voter turnout, results of the election, and updates on government formation.	.837	1,422
3	Violence	The tweet puts emphasis on reports of violence, threats of violence, rape, terrorism, or other violent crime.	.784	498
4	HistoricUpheaval	The tweet puts emphasis on the historic nature of the election or the permanent mark it will leave on Sweden	.678	373
5	Migration	The tweet puts emphasis on immigration policy, (im)migrants, refugees, Islam (as implicit to migration in Sweden), or multiculturalism.	.801	1,431
6	DebateDistortion	The tweet puts emphasis on external factors: Russian or other foreign interference, fake news, or platforms manipulating content.	.949	321
7	ElectoralFailure	The tweet puts emphasis on internal factors: voter fraud, public corruption, unfair treatment of parties, unfair voting rules, and other institutional failures that would impact the results.	.959	415
8	GlobalPolitics	The tweet puts emphasis on a relationship between the Swedish election and politics in other places (e.g., Europe, the UK, the EU, the West, the world).	.795	665
9	WelfareState	The tweet puts emphasis on Sweden's welfare state, including taxes and welfare benefits.	.887	61
10	UtopiaDystopia	The tweet puts emphasis on Sweden as a model leftist, progressive, socialist, or social democratic country. This may be in a positive or negative light.	.660	188
11	Counternarrative	The tweet puts emphasis on the idea that the media or dominant narrative sensationalises, exaggerates, or ignores some aspect of the election.	.818	609
12	Environment	The tweet puts emphasis on climate change, wildfires, or other environmental issue.	1.00	32
13	Racism	The tweet puts emphasis on racism in Swedish politics, including referring to a party as Nazi or having Nazi roots. Note that this does not refer to tweets that express racist views themselves.	.764	336
14	Rooting	The tweet puts emphasis on personal support for a political "team", including encouraging voter turnout (before the election) or expressing celebration or disappointment about the result (after the election).	.752	467
15	Financial	The tweet puts emphasis on the election's impact or potential impact on global markets, investments, the SEK, etc.	.830	35
16	Other	Emphasis of tweet not captured by the above categories. This includes tweets that are not about the election at all, are apolitical jokes about politicians, are not in English, or are unintelligible.	.700	259

Comments: The intercoder reliability statistic used is Cohen's Kappa (κ). This score was calculated on 800 tweets coded by both authors in the PopRand sample ($n = 5,000$).

Themes analysis

Our themes analysis focuses on the coded PopRand sample ($n = 5,000$), as this data best represents the overall Twitterverse. We began with descriptive statistics on the most-tweeted themes. However, because tweets can contain multiple themes, we also analysed the co-occurrence of themes using multimodal network analysis (Borgatti & Everett, 1997). Co-occurrence is often used in relation to hashtag use on Twitter. The multimodal analysis allows us to create a “network” built around the connections between themes based on their occurrence in the same tweet. Then, we overlaid the subnetwork data (described above) in order to visually analyse the relationships between themes and different communities on Twitter. Based on these analyses, we select some representative examples of tweets in the “Discussion” section to provide more context, a qualitative supplement to our quantitative approaches as suggested by Bruns and colleagues (2017) and Mahrt and Scharrow (2013).

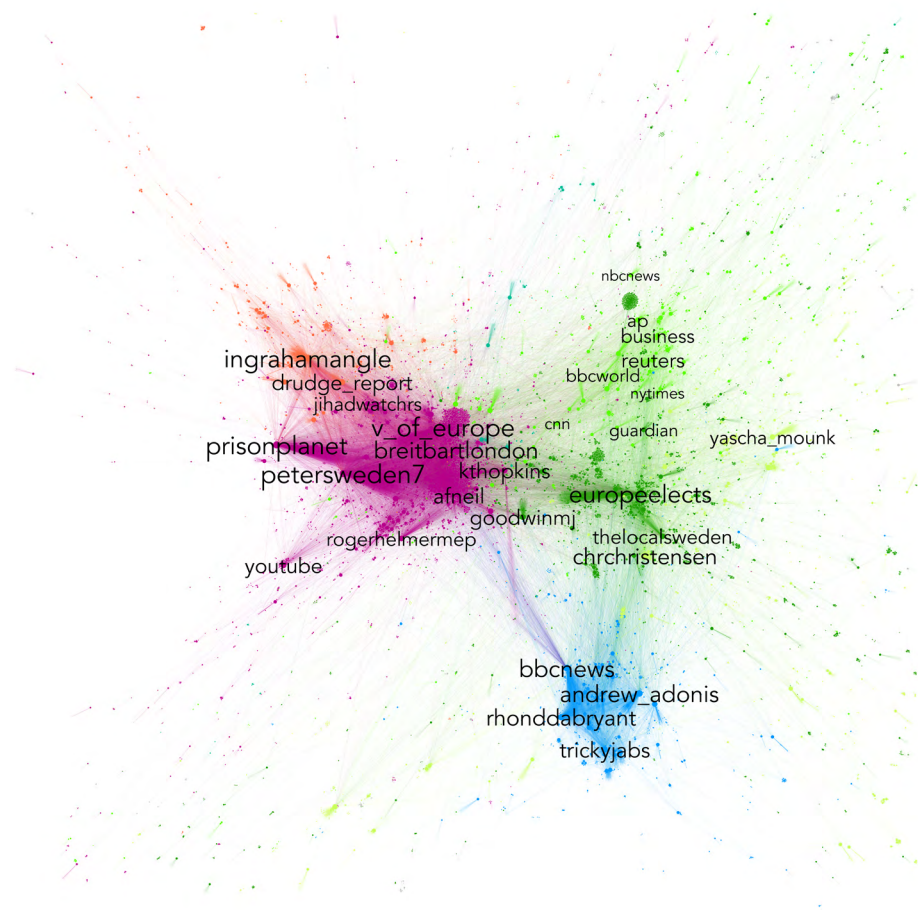
Findings

Using retweets and mentions in the data, a network graph was made using the network analysis program Gephi. Running the modularity algorithm in Gephi (resolution = 2.0), we find 1,715 “communities”, or subnetworks (Blondel et al., 2008). Within these, 93 per cent of users are found in the six largest subnetworks; the remaining users are part of small subnetworks and dyads unconnected to the main network. After examining the largest subnetworks, we further collapse the users into three main subnetworks for analysis (see Figure 1). These subnetworks are summarised as follows: European and American far-right media and commentators (45% of users) in the upper left of Figure 1; mainstream international media and centre-left commentators (35% of users) in the upper right; and a British-specific subnetwork (13% of users) in the lower part. This last subnetwork was largely non-existent until a few days before the election; 90 per cent of the tweets by this network were sent 7–12 September.

Themes

We allowed each tweet to contain multiple codes, and the content analysis demonstrates it was common for tweets to contain more than one theme: 55 per cent contained one theme; 31 per cent contained two; 9 per cent contained three; 5 per cent contained four; and 1 per cent contained five. Of those containing only one code, about a quarter (27%) exhibited the Horserace theme. Horserace was also one of the most common themes overall (25% of the sample), along with Migration (28%) and NationalistRise (25%). This is followed by GlobalPolitics, Counternarrative, and Violence. Environment, Financial, and WelfareState were marginal themes.

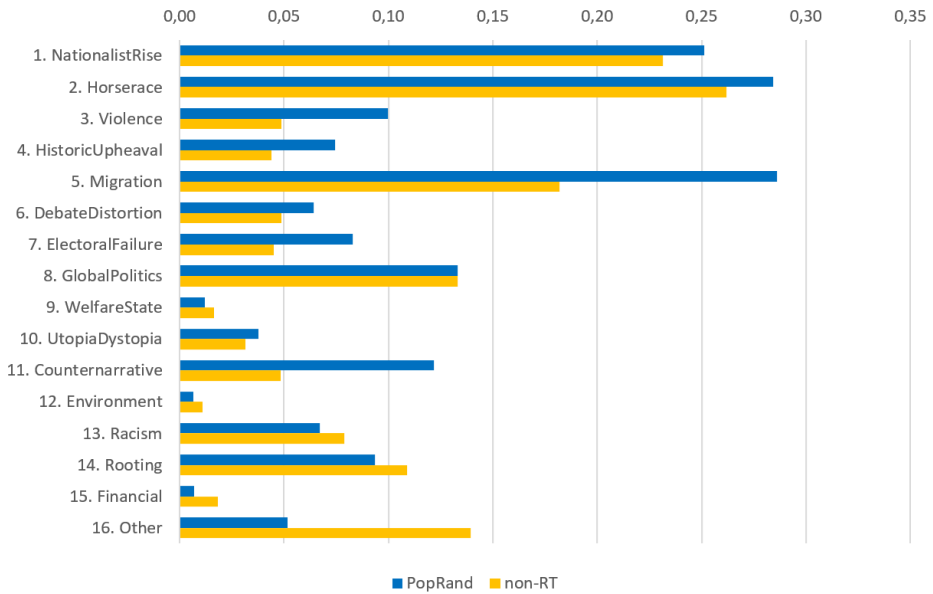
Figure 1 Network map, full English-language collection



Comments: Users are coloured according to subnetwork ID. The users retweeted and @mentioned the most by other users have been labelled. Generated in Gephi using ForceAtlas 2 ($n_{users} = 88,525$; $n_{tweets} = 173,678$). 24,957 tweets from the data collection could not be included because they do not @mention or retweet another user and thus have no network information.

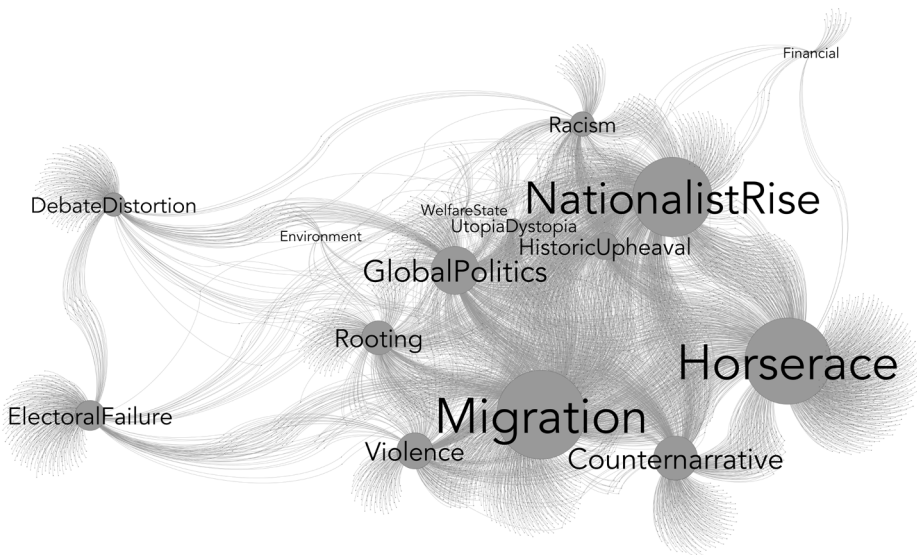
Additionally, from the sample of non-retweets (non-RT) we see that top themes in original tweets were also Horserace, NationalistRise, and Migration. However, comparing the non-RT sample to the population sample (PopRand), we can see that certain themes received more amplification – in particular, Migration, Violence, and especially Counternarrative. That means that relative to the number of original tweets emphasising these themes, their overall representation in the volume of tweets was disproportional. Figure 2 compares the portion of each theme in the two samples, showing which themes were amplified.

Figure 2 Results of content analyses, English-language samples (per cent)



Comments: The PopRand sample is a random sample of the entire English-language collection. The non-RT sample is a random sample of original tweets in the English-language collection ($n_{\text{PopRand}} = 5,000$; $n_{\text{non-RT}} = 1,000$). The graph helps show the themes that individuals tweeted about (non-RT sample) versus what themes were amplified through networks (PopRand sample)

Figure 3 Themes co-occurrence, PopRand sample

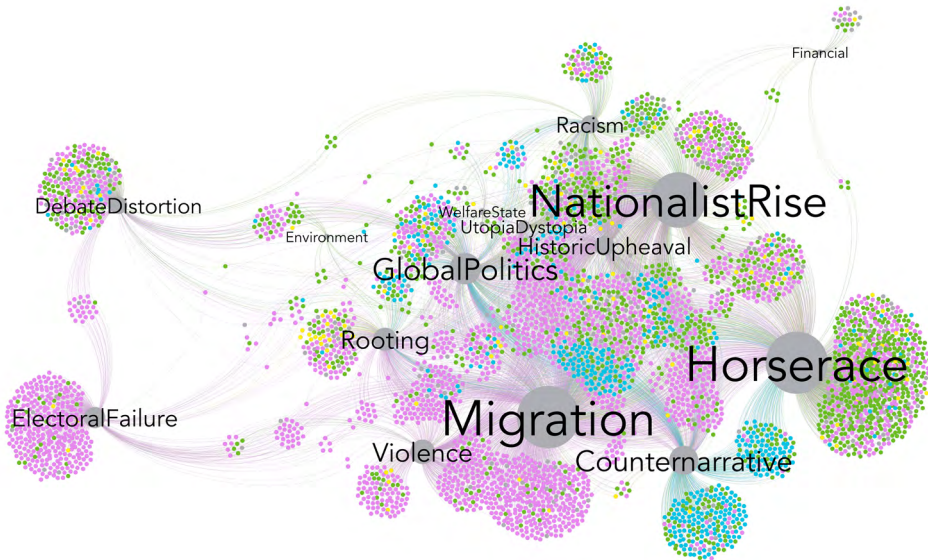


Comments: Generated in Gephi using ForceAtlas 2 ($n_{\text{tweets}} = 4,741$; $n_{\text{themes}} = 15$; $n_{\text{codings}} = 8,109$). Tweets associated with the “Other” category have been excluded.

To understand the connections between themes, we performed a calculation of co-occurrence through a multimodal network analysis. We use the PopRand sample for this analysis since it includes retweets and therefore better represents the content circulating on Twitter at the time. In the network shown in Figure 3, each tweet is a node connected to the themes it contains. (The Other category was for tweets not connected to any of the themes, so these tweets have been excluded from the network graph.) The themes are sized according to how many connections they have – that is, how many tweets contained the theme. As expected, we see that Migration, Horserace, and NationalistRise are the largest nodes.

Importantly, the visualisation also provides information on the relationship between themes: Tweets that contain multiple themes will draw those themes toward each other in the network. In Figure 3, we see that NationalistRise is centrally located, reflecting connections to a variety of different themes. Migration is also fairly centrally located. We also see that Racism and GlobalPolitics are closely aligned with NationalistRise, while Violence is more closely aligned with Migration. Financial, ElectoralFailure, and DebateDistortion appear on the periphery, reflecting that these themes were less often combined with other themes when they appeared, although ElectoralFailure and DebateDistortion are sometimes connected to each other, as might be expected given the content. Where connections are found within the main graph, DebateDistortion has more connections with Racism and GlobalPolitics, while ElectoralFailure has more in common with Violence and Migration, and to some degree Rooting (as will be discussed later, the connection between ElectoralFailure and Rooting appears to be disappointment that the user's favoured party did not win and the suspicion that fraud is to blame). We also see that major campaign issues like Environment and WelfareState – while not heavily emphasised in the tweets – do have connections to other themes. Environment has connections to Rooting, and WelfareState is closely tied to the central themes of NationalistRise and Migration. (These relationships are also confirmed numerically using the Jaccard Index, a statistical measure of overlap ranging from 0 to 1, where 1 is perfect overlap; see the Appendix.)

We can also use the network data (see Figure 1) to identify the relationships between the themes and the different subnetworks discussing the election. Figure 4 colourises the themes co-occurrence network according to the three main subnetworks identified previously.

Figure 4 Themes co-occurrence, PopRand sample (according to subnetwork)

Comments: Generated in Gephi using ForceAtlas 2 ($n_{\text{tweets}} = 4,741$; $n_{\text{themes}} = 15$; $n_{\text{codings}} = 8,109$). Tweets are coloured according to the subnetwork ID of the user: pink for tweets from the far-right subnetwork; green for tweets from mainstream subnetwork; and blue for tweets from the British subnetwork users. Tweets in yellow are from other subnetworks. (See the full network map in Figure 1.)

In this graph, we see that certain subnetworks emphasised certain themes and theme combinations. In particular, Migration, Violence, and ElectoralFailure were mainly themes expressed by the right-wing subnetwork, while DebateDistortion was more varied across the network. Counternarrative was largely expressed by the British network (as we will discuss later, this was largely due to critiques of the BBC’s reporting on the election). Tweets in the Environment, Racism, and Financial themes are generally originating from the mainstream media subnetwork. The subnetwork oriented around the media also emphasises the rise of the Sweden Democrats and their stance on immigration, leading to the dominance of NationalistRise, Migration, and Horserace, although these themes, along with GlobalPolitics, are also prominent throughout the network. We will explore the differences between the subnetworks further in the “Discussion” section.

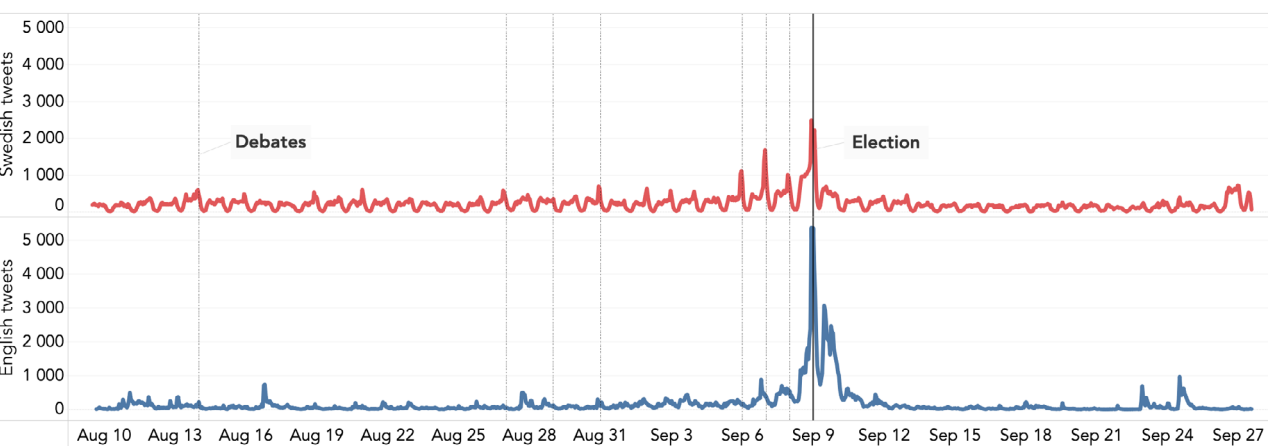
Role of the traditional press

Across all subnetworks, retweets and “via”-tweets dominate the data (81% of the collection); about one-third of all tweets include links to URLs outside Twitter. We also see from the network map (see Figure 1) that many of the most retweeted and @mentioned accounts were mainstream news outlets, such as Reuters, NBC, CNN, and *The Guardian*.

To better understand the role of news media, we investigate the timeline of tweeting. Figure 5 compares the Swedish language data with the English language dataset. As expected, the major peak in tweeting in both timelines is around elec-

tion night. However, the fluctuations in tweeting in the global Twittersphere do not match up with the Swedish sphere prior to election day. The Swedish-language tweeting spikes modestly during the televised debates (marked with grey lines in Figure 5), a moment of “thickening” predicted by previous literature on Twitter use during national elections. The English-language tweets do not follow this pattern; for example, there is little increase in tweeting immediately after the first televised debate on 14 August. Instead, we see a spike a few days later when NBC published a story about the election headlined “Far-right Sweden Democrats hope to topple century of socialism”, a story that was retweeted 589 times that day, according to our dataset. Another spike occurs on 7 September, the Friday before the Sunday election. This is when France24, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, Bloomberg News, *Time*, and *The Economist* all published articles previewing the election, receiving a combined 926 retweets in our data.

Figure 5 Timeline of hourly tweeting, full English- and Swedish-language collections



Comments: Temporal/volume comparison of Swedish-language tweets (top) and English-language tweets (bottom). Grey lines mark live televised debates and election day ($n_{\text{Swedish}} = 221,686$; $n_{\text{English}} = 198,635$).

However, other moments of thickening reveal the role of digital media – both Twitter users and alternative news outlets – in shaping the event. Around 12 August, there is an uptick in attention to the election mainly resulting from a story by the European identity site *Voice of Europe*, headlined “Swedish party wants to send back all migrants who refuse to work or contribute to society”. The story was tweeted over 3,000 times in our dataset. The attention came not only directly via *Voice of Europe*’s Twitter account, but through well-known right-wing Twitter users Peter Imanuelsen (@PeterSweden7) and David Hirst (@TheHirstComment), who also tweeted about the story.

Right-wing accounts also played a role in circulating mainstream stories. For example, a major source of links to the NBC story on 17 August was a tweet sent by *The Drudge Report* account, and a BBC story on car fires in Sweden was published on 14 August, but it received much more attention three days later

when American right-wing commentator Laura Ingraham linked to it in a tweet that connected the car fires to the election. Likewise, France24's story on 7 September about the election was boosted in large part thanks to links in tweets by *The Drudge Report* and Jack Prosobiec.

Moving along the global timeline, one of the larger swells in attention came on 28–29 August, when right-wing YouTube personalities Paul Joseph Watson (@PrisonPlanet) and Alex Jones sent several tweets about YouTube removing right-wing Swedish content, which they framed as an attempt by global tech giant Google to try to influence the election (DebateDistortion). Here, we also see direct connections between the global right wing and right-wing alternative news outlets in Sweden. In one of his tweets about the removal of YouTube content, Paul Joseph Watson links to an article in the Swedish language outlet *Fria Tider* with Google Translate activated. Similarly, an Infowars article, published on 31 August, linking car fires in Sweden to immigration, also cites *Fria Tider*.

Twitter commentators on other parts of the political spectrum were also influential. An uptick in tweeting on 3–4 September is partially tied to retweets of threads that same day by popular academics and Twitter personalities Yascha Mounk and Matt Goodwin (@GoodwinMJ). These received many more tweets than a *New York Times* article on the election published the same day. On 7 September, amid the flurry of international news coverage, another tweet that received significant attention was one that *critiqued* this coverage. The commentary, by the editor of the English-language outlet *The Local Sweden*, connects the sensationalist coverage of the election to the decline of media companies' investment in permanent overseas correspondents. The link to the story was tweeted 318 times that day and the following day. This tweet is a prime example of the Counternarrative theme. We will examine this further in the following section.

Discussion: Leveraging Sweden

We have sought to better understand the way that contemporary media events “create their own constituencies” (Dayan & Katz, 1992: 15) on global digital platforms and how those constituencies in turn “try to affirm their own control” of the event (della Porta & Diani, 2006: 75). Here, we further discuss this competition for control, bringing in examples of tweets that represent how themes intersected in the global network.

Two central themes united the overall network. First, we see that transnational publics engaged closely with the Horserace dimension of the election, seen in the high volume of tweets emphasising polls, culminating in a huge wave of interest on election night and the following day. Even though global users were not in tune with the Swedish-language live televised debates, the familiar pattern of the election *contest* – “rule-governed battles of champions” (Dayan & Katz, 1992: 26) – translated to the global arena. The ups and downs of the campaign ritual “enlisted” users to join the event as witnesses and team-loyalists (Dayan & Katz,

1992: 41). This is also visible in the Rooting tweets that cheer for a particular outcome.

The second important uniting theme was more specific to the case at hand. The anticipated success of nationalist politics, coded as NationalistRise, was a central theme across all subnetworks. We anticipated this to some degree based on reading the international news coverage. We also discovered when making the coding scheme that common election issues – health programmes, the economy, education – were not prominent in our data. However, we did not anticipate the degree to which NationalistRise would emerge as the central theme that connects nearly every other theme. Essentially, it is what Hepp and Couldry (2010: 11) called the thematic core.

However, this theme is interpreted differently by different subnetworks, as we can see in the other themes through which NationalistRise is refracted. In the mainstream subnetwork, NationalistRise often connected to Racism and UtopiaDystopia, as exemplified by the highly shared *Washington Post* story headlined, “A party with neo-Nazi origins may take hold of liberal Sweden”. Largely driven by such international media coverage, the mainstream subnetwork framed the rise of the Sweden Democrats as a threat – related to the same threat believed to exist in other Western democracies. In the following examples (the wording of some tweets has been altered to protect user privacy in accordance with Norwegian research data standards), we see how users create the overlaps between NationalistRise with GlobalPolitics, as users in the UK and the US relate Sweden to their local context:

It’s looking like the Swedish election will put Nazis in power. So the nightmare continues. #Brexit.

There’s an election in Sweden this weekend and from what I can see it’s going to be as much of a catastrophe as the American election.

For the mainstream subnetwork, the Swedish election was largely understood through the Racism and NationalistRise themes, which were emphasised in periodic news coverage that prompted spikes in tweeting in the subnetwork. Sweden became a shorthand or “narrative crux” (Colliver et al., 2018) for those seeking to make a point about the enormity of these threats, since they exist “even in Sweden”.

In the right-wing subnetwork, NationalistRise was likewise an anchoring theme. However, here it was tethered to Horserace, Migration, and Violence (and the latter two were almost always connected to each other). This popular tweet by Fox News host Laura Ingraham is an example of how all four themes could come together in the right-wing subnetwork:

Swedish election: Main blocs neck and neck, lose seats...as nationalists gain. Under-reported story--ALL major parties moved to right on immigration/refugee issue.

The above tweet also reflects how the familiar ritual of the election cycle could help create an avenue for Dayan's (2010) Trojan horses. The event is not only a contest between different Swedish parties, but between different *worldviews*. As in the mainstream subnetwork, the right-wing subnetwork connects the election in Sweden to other countries as well, but with emphasis on Migration. In the following example, Migration overlaps with Horserace and GlobalPolitics. The user anticipates election day, and uses the rhetoric of American immigration politics ("illegals") as well as an adaptation of former president Trump's campaign slogan to contextualise the Swedish election:

1 more month t'ill Sweden's elections. Sweden, you have a chance to be that prosperous nation you once were. Please vote for Sweden Democrats and get rid of the illegals. #MakeSwedenGreatAgain

This tweet is also an example of the way people used Twitter to express a team spirit, integral to the contest genre. Indeed, the right-wing subnetwork was more likely than the other subnetworks to send Rooting tweets (appearing in 12% of their tweets). As Eide and colleagues (2008) found in the Danish Cartoon controversy, we observed during our analysis that users in this subnetwork ported the Swedish election to a global sphere by emphasising "civilizational" themes – discussing barbarism, survival, and the West. We have selected the following two tweets as examples of this occurring in the overlap of Migration and Rooting:

#Sweden's election is this coming Sunday! #svpol Swedes need to step up and vote out the current Government that is allowing this barbarism to occur in their country!

Good luck to Sweden today. We Europeans have to remember: we can either let liberalism pursue demographic replacement and islamisation, or we can choose to SAVE our heritage and our people!

Importantly, Rooting tweets also position the user more as a witness or participant than a spectator (Dayan, 2010). Although not in the cosmopolitan spirit that Hallin and Mancini (1992) and Robertson (2010) sought, this sense of collective witnessing may be why the right-wing subnetwork was especially active in the data – possessing, as Grumke (2013) has described, a kind of cosmopolitan spirit with nationalist ideology.

"Our first fully fake election": Questioning the contest

Dayan and Katz (1992: 46) theorised that of all the genres of media events, contests were most open to a kind of meta-debate prior to their occurrence, focused on the rules participants would follow. Our findings point to such a debate happening transnationally about the Swedish election as well, through the themes of ElectoralFailure and DebateDistortion.

In Figure 4, we can see that these themes are largely discussed separately from other topics. Additionally, these themes were addressed differently by subnetworks. DebateDistortion tweets by the mainstream subnetwork focused on issues well-known in other countries: potential foreign interference and efforts to combat misinformation. As previously noted, the right-wing subnetwork also used the theme DebateDistortion, but with the focus on YouTube parent-company Google potentially interfering in the Swedish public sphere by removing content by the far-right nationalist party Alternative for Sweden. This story was responsible for a peak in tweeting around 28 August, and it was also retweeted by parts of the mainstream subnetwork, resulting in a modest increase in tweeting in that subnetwork as well.

However, the more important theme in the far-right subnetwork was ElectoralFailure, characterised by tweets about alleged voter fraud and elite corruption that altered the results. After SD did not perform as well as polls predicted, this theme became even more prominent. An example of an ElectoralFailure tweet from this subnetwork dated after the election came from a Swedish user writing in English: “I believe we just had our first fully fake election”. Another user in Germany connected ElectoralFailure to GlobalPolitics: “There was voter fraud in the Sweden election. No doubt we’ll see the same in Germany’s next election”. Later, the increase in tweet volume on 23 September (see Figure 5) is largely due to a series of tweets by Peter Imanuelsen (@PeterSweden7), in which he describes “900 reports of election fraud” and suggests the election was so riddled with problems that a new election is needed. Imanuelsen was retweeted over 2,000 times that day. In other words, the integrity of Sweden’s voting system appears to be an important aspect of the election’s portability to a global sphere. As one user wrote in reply to @PeterSweden7, “So basically Sweden is now run by the American Democratic party?”

Countering the thematic core

Our analysis points to social media users’ continued reliance on the traditional foreign press for understanding the event and thickening attention to the Swedish election. Outside of the right-wing subnetwork, the most shared URLs were to stories from Reuters, the BBC, Bloomberg News, NBC, and *The Guardian*. In all, 30 per cent of tweets contained a URL. This reliance may be especially true of foreign events: In the Swedish-language data captured with hashtags, only 12 per cent of tweets contained a URL. However, the findings also show that influential users often played an important intermediary role in circulating news coverage. Moreover, we see a strong *counter*-response to the dominance of the press, which is our final point of discussion.

This counter-response, captured by the code Counternarrative, is best seen in the British subnetwork, which formed later than the others, largely in reaction to the BBC’s coverage of the election. The Counternarrative theme appears in 59

per cent of tweets from users in this subnetwork. One of the most retweeted was by Labour politician Andrew Adonis:

BBC reporting of Sweden's election sensationalist – a narrative of Brexit-style far right takeover. Only problem – the result of the election. The far right came 3rd, with 17%. The leading party was – wait for it – the Social Democrats, which BBC had on the verge of extinction.

Counternarrative, Horserace, and GlobalPolitics overlap in this tweet as Adonis leverages the Swedish election to critique domestic media. Other tweets call out the BBC for not being as tough on the British right wing as they are on Sweden's right-wing politicians, accounting for a high overlap of GlobalPolitics and NationalistRise in this subnetwork.

To a lesser degree, Counternarrative also appears in the mainstream subnetwork (9% of tweets). However, one of the most retweeted users in the data was Christian Christensen (@ChrChristensen), a journalism professor at the University of Stockholm, who frequently tweeted about problems with the international media's coverage of the Horserace aspect of the election and focus on SD:

To international outlets covering the elections in Sweden: Don't give media oxygen to ANYONE pushing the "collapsing Sweden" narrative. It's a childish, nihilistic, bigoted message that just deflects from real politics and real issues.

As mentioned, such Counternarrative messages were disproportionately amplified by users (see Figure 2). Thus, while NationalistRise may be the thematic core of the discussions of Sweden's election, we also see Counternarrative as its counterweight. This finding is in line with Volkmer and Deffner's (2010: 226) argument that among transnational audiences, particularly those online, "the role of media powerfully defining this center is being renegotiated". The real global threat that the Swedish election represents, according to the Counternarrative tweets, is not the rise of nationalism. Rather, it is the obsession with spectacle in the global media (Kellner, 2010) and the dominance of a single narrative that smooths out and simplifies the local realities of a distinct national event.

Conclusion

The 2018 Swedish election was not just a Swedish event. Our goal in this article has been to understand media events in an age when communication by ordinary people is less restricted by traditional national boundaries. We examined how a classic form of media event – a national election – becomes deterritorialised in a globalised information environment characterised by digital networks. As advocated by Hepp and Couldry (2010: 12), we have sought to investigate how social actors use media events for "constructing reality in specific, maybe conflicting ways [and] to establish certain discursive positions and to maintain those actors' power".

In response to the first research question on the networks that formed, we found three distinct subnetworks, characterised as international media and centre-left or left commentators; British commentators and politicians; and international right-wing media and commentators (the largest network in terms of both users and tweets). Our second research question asked what themes global Twitter networks emphasised to make sense of the election. Here, we find that the subnetworks were largely united in framing the election as a fight over nationalism, but they deployed that theme differently and through various existing global and local debates. Finally, regarding our third research question on the role of news media, we find that the traditional foreign press was still a critical starting point for understanding the event, and it contributed to moments of collective thickening. However, individual users often acted as the gatekeepers, even for stories from major news outlets, and also promoted alternative or counter-readings of the event. On the political right in particular, users acted as political activists in the process, contextualising the election through a civilizational worldview. There are also indications of a much larger commitment to following Swedish politics on the right and connections between English- and Swedish-language alternative media.

The findings demonstrate that as public spheres move online, it is likely that national elections – not only global “mega-events” like American presidential elections – become part of discussions in transnational Twitter networks. Here, we have demonstrated how a small Scandinavian country’s election became a symbol for threats facing the entire Western world, and that gaining ownership of the narrative about Sweden became part of the fight to define politics far beyond Sweden’s borders. This analysis had limitations, however. Using manual coding meant we had to take samples of the larger dataset. Computational text analysis or linguistic approaches may be able to capture more dimensions of the way global audiences interact with events. Likewise, a qualitative discourse analysis could provide more insight into the interpretation of foreign events by social media users. Another question we did not address in this study is the degree to which global interpretations become part of the national election discourse – or are in effect, *reterritorialised*. The present study adds to the growing evidence that digital media blur the boundaries between national and global politics.

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Appendix

Table A1 Jaccard Index – measure of overlap between themes (PopRand sample)

Theme	Total tweets	Counter-narrative	DebateDistortion	Electoral-Failure	Environment	Financial	GlobalPolitics	HistoricUpheaval	Horrerace	Migration	NationalistRise	Other	Racism	Rooting	Utopia-Dystopia	Violence	WelfareState
Total tweets	-	609	321	415	32	35	665	373	1,422	1,431	1,256	259	336	467	188	498	61
Counternarrative	609	-	0.004	0.005	0.000	0.002	0.111	0.002	0.099	0.066	0.059	0.000	0.051	0.013	0.005	0.020	0.009
DebateDistortion	321	0.004	-	0.041	0.000	0.000	0.038	0.001	0.000	0.005	0.005	0.000	0.011	0.003	0.004	0.006	0.000
ElectoralFailure	415	0.005	0.041	-	0.000	0.000	0.006	0.003	0.002	0.018	0.006	0.000	0.000	0.008	0.007	0.025	0.000
Environment	32	0.000	0.000	0.000	-	0.000	0.006	0.000	0.000	0.007	0.000	0.000	0.003	0.014	0.005	0.004	0.069
Financial	35	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.000	-	0.004	0.000	0.003	0.001	0.005	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.005	0.000	0.021
GlobalPolitics	665	0.111	0.038	0.006	0.006	0.004	-	0.023	0.027	0.084	0.091	0.000	0.051	0.068	0.017	0.007	0.013
HistoricUpheaval	373	0.002	0.001	0.003	0.000	0.000	0.023	-	0.044	0.107	0.191	0.000	0.086	0.065	0.214	0.093	0.021
Horrerace	1,422	0.099	0.000	0.002	0.000	0.003	0.027	0.044	-	0.097	0.148	0.000	0.016	0.020	0.004	0.015	0.001
Migration	1,431	0.066	0.005	0.018	0.007	0.001	0.084	0.107	0.097	-	0.242	0.000	0.026	0.109	0.067	0.214	0.019
NationalistRise	1,256	0.059	0.005	0.006	0.000	0.005	0.091	0.191	0.148	0.242	-	0.000	0.118	0.039	0.113	0.074	0.020
Other	259	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Racism	336	0.051	0.011	0.000	0.003	0.000	0.051	0.086	0.016	0.026	0.118	0.000	-	0.009	0.076	0.008	0.000
Rooting	467	0.013	0.003	0.008	0.014	0.000	0.068	0.065	0.020	0.109	0.039	0.000	0.009	-	0.008	0.094	0.004
UtopiaDystopia	188	0.005	0.004	0.007	0.005	0.005	0.017	0.214	0.004	0.067	0.113	0.000	0.076	0.008	-	0.112	0.020
Violence	498	0.020	0.006	0.025	0.004	0.000	0.007	0.093	0.015	0.214	0.074	0.000	0.008	0.094	0.112	-	0.015
WelfareState	61	0.009	0.000	0.000	0.069	0.021	0.013	0.021	0.001	0.019	0.020	0.000	0.000	0.004	0.020	0.015	-

Comments: The highest overlap is between NationalistRise and Migration, closely followed by Violence and Migration, as seen in the bold figures.

Article 4

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George Floyd and cosmopolitan memory formation in online networks: A report from Northern Europe

George Floyd y la formación de memoria cosmopolita en redes sociales: Un informe desde el norte de Europa

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Abstract

This work analyses the presence and management As personalized digital networks have increased in cultural and political relevance, there is a more urgent need to understand their role in democratic memory-formation. Moreover, scholars have suggested that, in a globalized digitalized age, collective memory could extend to transnational publics. This study aims to advance the understanding of memory on global social networks by investigating the way the death of George Floyd in the summer of 2020 was treated and understood by Twitter-users outside the United States. Using a combination of big data and contemporaneous qualitative interviews with users in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, the paper brings the concept of cosmopolitan memory into the social media era. The study finds that users fused the event and its aftermath with observations of injustice in their own countries. However, this process operated differently among users of different ideological outlooks. Another key finding is that users on the radical right resented the uptake of the event as a cosmopolitan memory, and employed techniques termed as "combative counter-memory."

Keywords

cosmopolitan memory; counter-memory; mixed methods; race; right-wing; Twitter

Resumen

A medida que las redes digitales personalizadas han crecido en relevancia cultural y política, la necesidad de comprender su papel en la formación de la memoria democrática se ha vuelto más urgente. Además, los académicos han sugerido que en una era de globalización y digitalización, la memoria colectiva podría extenderse a públicos transnacionales. Este estudio tiene como objetivo avanzar en la comprensión de la memoria en las redes sociales globales al investigar la forma en que los usuarios de Twitter fuera de los Estados Unidos trataron y entendieron la muerte de George Floyd en el verano de 2020. Usando una combinación de big data y entrevistas cualitativas contemporáneas con usuarios en Noruega, Suecia y Dinamarca, el artículo trae el concepto de memoria cosmopolita a la era de las redes sociales. El estudio encuentra que los usuarios fusionaron el evento y sus consecuencias con observaciones de injusticia en sus propios países. Sin embargo, este proceso funcionó de manera diferente entre los usuarios de diferentes puntos de vista ideológicos. Otro hallazgo clave es que los usuarios de la derecha radical resintieron la aceptación del evento como una memoria cosmopolita y emplearon técnicas de "contramemoria combativa".

Palabras clave

derecha política; memoria cosmopolita; contramemoria; métodos mixtos; raza; Twitter

1. Introduction

In May of 2020, a video went viral on Twitter. It showed the death of a Black man in Minnesota, USA, by a police officer. The murder of George Floyd galvanized the already active Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in the United States. More than that, however, it galvanized people who had not previously been part of the movement – both in and outside the U.S. BLM protests took place across Europe in June and July, mirroring those in the U.S. (El País, 2020). The event inspired questions about racial justice not only in the U.S. but in other countries as well.

Pivotal political events have long been the basis of collective memories formation within nation-states (Foucault, 1977; Halbwachs, [1952] 1992), and it has been proposed that such forms of memory could be global as well (Levy & Sznajder, 2002; Ryan, 2014; Saito, 2021; Volkmer & Deffner, 2010). An important part of this is the coverage of the event in the media (Garde-Hansen, 2011). However, the death of George Floyd and its aftermath played out not just in newspapers and television, but foremost online, on digital platforms that are globally available. The Twitter hashtags #BLM and #icantbreathe came to represent the movement in the collective culture.

Personalized transnational networks are now integrated into democratic politics (Blasco-Duatis & Coenders, 2020; Guerrero-Solé, et al., 2022; Larsson & Moe, 2014; Orbegozo-Terradillos, Morales-i-Gras & Larrondo-Ureta, 2020). However, their role in the formation of collective memories is still little understood (Birkner & Donk, 2020). Neiger, Meyers & Zandberg (2011) write that media must be understood as both tools and agents in the process of public remembering – that is, media both document and create collective memories. Digital social media platforms introduce new dynamics to this process, as they allow for real-time interaction, curation, and co-creation of events, paving the way for more horizontal memory formation (Reading, 2011) and even counter-memory (Birkner & Donk, 2020). Moreover, these reflexive platforms have been found to be especially prone to conveyance of misinformation compared with traditional media systems, potentially altering “individual and collective memories in a worrying way” (Sánchez-Castillo & López-Olano, 2021: 1).

This article aims to advance the understanding of the way globalized social media contribute to democratic memory formation, viewing the death of George Floyd as a transnational event (Volkmer & Deffner, 2010). While some research has explored the spatial and material forms of collective memories associated with Floyd and the BLM movement (Heersmink, 2021; Mendes, 2021), so far surprisingly little academic attention has been paid to what the event can tell us about cosmopolitan memory formation through digital networks.

This article uses interview and tweet data from Twitter users in Scandinavian countries collected around the time of Floyd's death. Norway, Denmark, and Sweden offer interesting examples for study because of their stark historical differences on the issue of race with the United States, while also being recent sites of populist–nativist and neo-Nazi sentiment (Eriksson, 2015; Lundby & Repstad, 2018).

Furthermore, the use of contemporaneous interviews offers an unrepresented methodological approach in the area of media and memory, a field where studies often rely on historical documents and recollections (Neiger, Meyers & Zandberg, 2011). The data presented here show memory formation in-process (recognizing, of course, that collective memories are subject to constant re-negotiation [Misztal, 2005]). The participants in these interviews were found in Twitter data collected using the DMI-TCAT (see e.g. Orbegozo-Terradillos, Morales-i-Gras & Larrondo-Ureta, 2020) and data from their timelines offer supplemental information on the users' relationship to the event on Twitter.

This article is structured as follows. I will first examine the previous empirical and theoretical scholarship on media and democratic memory, followed by an examination of the theory of cosmopolitan memory. I then consider the particular circumstances of Twitter and discuss the case study. Next, I lay out the way participants were chosen and the method for analyzing their interviews and tweets. Finally, the article presents the findings of a thematic analysis, contextualized by previous research, and offers the implications for democratic societies.

1.1. Democratic memory and media

Memories are an individual experience, but since the mid-20th Century, sociologists have come to understand the powerful role of memory as a collective phenomenon. In the influential *The Collective Memory*, Maurice Halbwachs outlined a Durkheim-inspired vision of how individuals' understanding of past events are informed through a relational process. In this process, collective memory forms through a continuous interaction between individual and collective, each feeding back on itself ([1992] [1952]: 40).

Since studies have helped make clear that mass communication is an important player in this process, providing a means for collective mnemonic practice of commemoration (Saito, 2021: 223). Not surprisingly, memory studies and media studies have had a close relationship. In an exploration of this relationship,

Garde-Hansen (2011) writes that "'media witnessing' has now become one of the key concepts for understanding the relationship between experiences, events and their representations" (3). That is, most of the memories shared by citizens are now of events they experienced solely through the media.

Collective memory, formed with the help of the media, is necessary for mythmaking in modern societies, and as such it is a highly contested process (Molden, 2016; Tello, 2022). This is especially true of the treatment and memorialization of traumatic events and periods of injustice. Foucault suggests that hegemonic histories, particularly those promoted by governments through monuments, are subject to challenge through what he called "counter-memory" (1977: 160) – that is, mnemonic resistance by people who remember "against the grain" of the canonized narrative (Medina, 2011: 12). In his examination of memory in democratic societies, Brendese (2014) argues that memory is continually subject to power relations that shape what is remembered by whom, and in what manner, and also what is forgotten (2).

This process is at times formalized, as seen in the proposed Democratic Memory Law in Spain which would revisit the crimes from the Civil War (1936-39) and open up the possibilities of prosecutions. In the case of the Black Lives Matter movement, a less formal procedure of memory renegotiation has taken place in public spaces with the erecting of new monuments and removal of others (Mendes, 2021; Heersmink, 2021). In either case, what is remembered and what is forgotten has critical implications for the stories that the societies tell about themselves, the building of trust and cohesion, and the solutions that publics seek to future problems (Misztal, 2005).

In the following section, I examine how this process may be scaled up beyond the nation-state.

1.2. Cosmopolitan memory

In recent decades, scholars have noted that the dual processes of globalization and digitalization open up new questions on memory formation. In a 2002 article, Levy and Sznajder argued for the "decoupling of collective memory and national history" (2002: 89). They examined treatments of the Holocaust, which they argued was not only a German–Jewish memory, but had become a "cosmopolitan memory" and a moral lesson shared by people across Europe and the United States through representations in film, print, and photographic media. Levy and Sznajder argued new "memoriscapes" were opening up through global media and suggested that a key question for scholars is "how do these transnational memory forms come about and what do they consist of?" (2002: 88).

The concept of cosmopolitan memory has become an important touchstone for theorists of global society who suggest that global media have provided a view into the "suffering of foreign others" (Saito, 2021: 230). Volkmer and Deffner argue processes of "transnational discursive remediation" have established a transnational "eventsphere" in which events are understood no longer as merely local but as global phenomena (2010: 226). Yet there is an interplay with the local/national. Octobre (2021: 280) argues this is a hybridizing process in which global culture is experienced in concert with national culture through 1) universalization of the particular and 2) particularization of the universal. A central question is what *other* memories an event is compared to. Picking up the thread of memory as contested, Ryan (2014) notes that conflicts can arise between in this process between cosmopolitan memory and national. She writes:

The effectiveness of cosmopolitan memory as a moral lever is not assured, and even its adoption cannot ensure positive outcomes for victims, as its tenets are nationalized and its discourse distorted, in some cases, to serve the national interest (2014: 513).

Ryan usefully nuances Levy and Sznajder's theory, concluding that internal processes are as important as global processes in the development of cosmopolitan memory. In the following section I will explore the implications that global digital media platforms have for collective memory information.

1.3. Twitter, memory, and counter-memory

In contrast to the top-down, elite forms of mediated memory formation – forms such as newspapers, films, and songs – social media potentially make way for a more collaborative approach and greater democratization of memory making (Garde-Hansen, 2011) by giving more power to what Molden calls the "carriers, consumers, reproducers, but also challengers of this history" (2016: 125).

Although this field of study is still under development, empirical research has confirmed the popular opinion that online activity increases during and after major tragedies (Eriksson, 2015). Eriksson's own analysis focused on Twitter in the wake of the terrorist attack in Norway by neo-Nazi Anders Behring Breivik. She concluded the platform offers a means of processing collective trauma and "fulfils a need for meaning-making within the public sphere that is outside of the mass media discourse" (Eriksson, 2015: 368), thus allowing users to be part of the creation and diffusion of collective memory.

Eriksson notes that her data encompassed not just Norwegian Twitter users, but an international audience following news of the attacks. The global memory potential of social media has been explored in more detail by Reading (2011), who argues Twitter and other platforms contribute to what she calls the global memory field – “global” embodying both digitalization and globalization.

Reading argues social media create a fundamentally different situation for collective memory formation. To illustrate the point, she offers a comparison between the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 and the shooting of a protester captured on video during the 2009 Iranian elections:

In the public witnessing of the Battle of Waterloo, material practices and discursive formations were limited to the written press. The subsequent cultural memorialization of the event has taken place in multiple forms and include tourist visits to the site of the battle itself ... paintings, stories, and references within popular songs. ... The digital witnessing of Neda, in contrast, took place within minutes and hours (2011: 248).

Reading (2011) proposes six dynamics of memory formation that are different in the age of digital media. *Transmediality* identifies the material form through which an event is witnessed. *Velocity* refers to the rapidity of memory formation. *Extensivity* is how widely the event was known; *modality*, referring to the way the event is transmitted and experienced. *Valency* refers to the way memories are bonded to other memory assemblages. *Viscosity* characterizes how easily the event is turned into different versions. And finally *axes*, meaning whether the event is transmitted vertically (e.g. from the press) or horizontally, from person to person.

Such features have been brought to the fore in further work by Birkner and Donk (2020) who propose a subfield of social media memory studies is needed. They document a case of memory and counter-memory formation on Facebook during a debate about changing the name of Hindenburg Square in Münster. Birkner and Donk suggest Foucault's (1977) concept of counter-memory is especially salient in the new media age. They find Facebook was used by the right to put forth a positive version of Hindenburg – a framing different from that found in the mainstream local media. “This should be investigated more broadly in the future, as we still know little about the [memory] functionality of counter-public spheres in Web 2.0” (Birkner & Donk, 2020: 379).

2. Case background: Race in the U.S. and Scandinavia

George Floyd was killed on May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, after being pinned under three police officers who believed he'd bought cigarettes with counterfeit money. The incident provided a focal point for a long-running discussion about the legacy of racism in American institutions, particularly the police. Protests broke out across the country and continued through much of the summer. It was noted to be a turning point on race in the U.S., visible in unprecedented shifts in public opinion about racism (Saad, 2021).

Such swings in opinion arguably marked an important moment in American collective memory. Brendese (2014) argues that the legacy of slavery in the United States continues to inform American democratic memory. Slavery began in the American colonial era and lasted more than 200 years, ending only through the bloody U.S. Civil War (1861-1865). “America's slave past simultaneously wields incredible power over the present but is rendered unspeakable in political discourse” he writes (2014: 63). Brendese suggests that the United States has a “segregated memory,” and that particularly on the political right, a history of white victimhood has been collectively developed through right-wing media. Banks finds that Fox News especially has used a technique of “post-racial rhetoric,” in which it is Black Lives Matter protesters who are construed as racist (2018: 716).

In contrast, Scandinavia presents a radically different context on the issue of race. This Northern European region is made up of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, which share similar languages and histories. Scandinavian countries were comparatively minor actors in the African slave trade (Schnakenbourg, 2020) and until the post-World War II era had relatively little in-migration (Migrationsverket, 2020). The countries have a reputation for being highly egalitarian and have positioned themselves as global leaders on the issue of human rights (Syvertsen et al., 2014). Nativist-populist parties have had to tread lightly in Scandinavia, still marked by their experiences with Nazism during the war. However, with the increase in immigrants from Middle Eastern countries in recent decades, nativist-populism has become more mainstream in Scandinavian politics (Lundby & Repstad, 2018).

Despite different political systems and histories, Scandinavia has become a political reference point in American debates over multiculturalism. At a 2017 rally in Florida, Donald Trump decried “what happened last night in Sweden,” referencing a (non-existent) terrorist attack by immigrants (Chan, 2017). Scandinavian news media in turn have been highly attuned to American racial debates in recent years, perhaps spurred on by the Trump presidency, which news consumers experienced as a shocking

disruption to usual news flows (Moe, Ytre-Arne & Nærlund, 2019). Political communication on Twitter from the United States is often cited in Scandinavian media, and even becomes part of Scandinavian public culture. A 2021 article in Norway's *Aftenposten* documented the importation of "woke-ness" and "cancel culture" from American identity politics (Hagesæther, Johansen & Bjørge, 2021). Though Twitter is a niche platform in Scandinavia (Newman et al., 2021), it is popular among Scandinavian political elites and the politically engaged (Larsson & Moe, 2014).

Inspired by previous research on democratic memory and media, and presenting the death of George Floyd as a transnational event in the online "eventsphere," this paper asks, how social media users articulate the collective memory of George Floyd's death. This question is explored through the following three subquestions:

RQ_a: How do users express the collective that "witnessed" Floyd's death?

RQ_b: What other memory assemblages do users connect Floyd's death to?

RQ_c: What strategies of counter-memory formation do users employ?

In the next section, I describe the data and methods used to answer these questions.

3. Methodology

This paper draws on a combination of interviews with 23 users and their Twitter data. The users are located in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark and interviews were conducted via Zoom from late May 2020 to March 2021. The interviews were part of a larger research project on transnational political networks, with the aim to understand how Twitter users experience the confluence of politics from different geographies online. As part of this project, large scale data collections were made using the DMI-TCAT tool (Borra & Rieder, 2014). The collections included the 2016 U.S. election, the 2018 Swedish election, the 2019 Danish election, and the first four months of the Covid-19 pandemic. Random samples were also taken. Several hundred-thousand Scandinavian users were identified computationally in these collections using language and location markers in user profiles (see Bruns & Enli, 2018, for similar methodology).

Prospective participants for the qualitative interviews were identified based on their involvement and visibility in networks in the data collections of Twitter data. The participants were reached through private direct messages (DMs) on Twitter.

The interviews were not originally focused on the issue of race, but subjects were allowed to bring up topics of interest, and one of the consistent topics was the killing of George Floyd and the BLM movement.¹ Moe, Ytre-Arne & Nærlund (2019) describe a similar phenomenon in their study of Norwegian news consumers, conducted in the fall of 2016, in which the election of Donald Trump became an unanticipated focus of the material. As in that study, the surfacing of Floyd's death in the interviews is itself indicative of the presence of the event in the subjects' memories.

Of the 23 participants, three are in Denmark, eight are in Sweden, and 12 are in Norway. Eight participants are women; the average age is 45; four have an immigrant background. Follower count (recorded at the time of the interview) varied from 281 to 136,000; the median count is 3,272 followers. Of these, 15 characterized their politics as being left of center; 2 of these 15 see themselves on the radical or far left. Eight of the participants characterized their politics as right of center; 6 of these 8 lean toward the cultural or radical right embodied by nativist-populist parties.² Table 1 lists background information on each participant.

The interviews followed a semistructured interview guide and lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour. In advance of each interview, data from the participant's Twitter timeline was collected with the participant's permission using the DMI-TCAT, and examples of tweets were presented as prompts for the participant. Throughout the interviews, the author engaged in a verification process as advocated by Kvale (1996) by asking multiple questions to get at the same point, paraphrasing the participant's perspective, and asking the subject to clarify or elaborate on points they raised.

Table 1: List of participants

Anonymized identifier*	Country	Followers	Age	Gender	Immigrant background**
P04	Norway	1929	49	F	no
P05	Norway	3340	56	M	no
P06	Denmark	345	49	M	no
P07	Norway	320	23	F	no
P08	Norway	120600	31	F	no
P09	Norway	6045	52	M	no
P10	Sweden	14200	62	M	no
P11	Denmark	20200	39	F	no
P12	Norway	595	54	M	no
P13	Sweden	12100	47	M	no
P14	Norway	39100	48	M	no
P15	Norway	757	58	M	no
P16	Norway	3272	45	M	no
P17	Sweden	281	36	M	yes
P18	Sweden	7399	60	F	yes
P19	Sweden	2830	29	M	no
P20	Denmark	9450	54	M	no
P21	Norway	3701	"40s"	F	no
P22	Norway	136300	43	M	yes
P23	Sweden	384	56	F	no
P24	Sweden	1969	38	M	no
P25	Norway	1830	32	M	no
P26	Sweden	1125	44	F	yes

*Additional research interviews were conducted prior to Floyd's death which are not included in the analysis

**Either the subject or their parents immigrated to a Scandinavian country from outside of Scandinavia

Source: Author

The audio of the interviews was recorded and initial transcripts were algorithmically generated through NVivo or Amazon AWS transcription services. This was followed by manual review and revision of the transcript in conjunction with audio playback. A multi-step method of qualitative content analysis, categorization, and hermeneutical interpretation was then performed by the author on the tweets and transcripts, with concepts of democratic memory, cosmopolitan memory, and counter-memory providing a theoretical backdrop.

This method distilled the data material into four common themes that more specifically answer the research questions. In the next section I first describe the prevalence of Floyd's death in the data, followed by an investigation of each theme and how it emerged.

4. Results

4.1 Pervasiveness of the topic

The first reference in the material to George Floyd's death occurred only two days after his death. P04, a teacher in Norway who often tweets about politics, retweeted a CNN reporter the day before our interview:

Minneapolis mayor says police officers have been fired in George Floyd case (retweet by P04).

The subject of Floyd himself did not come up in the interview, though American politics in general were a central focus.

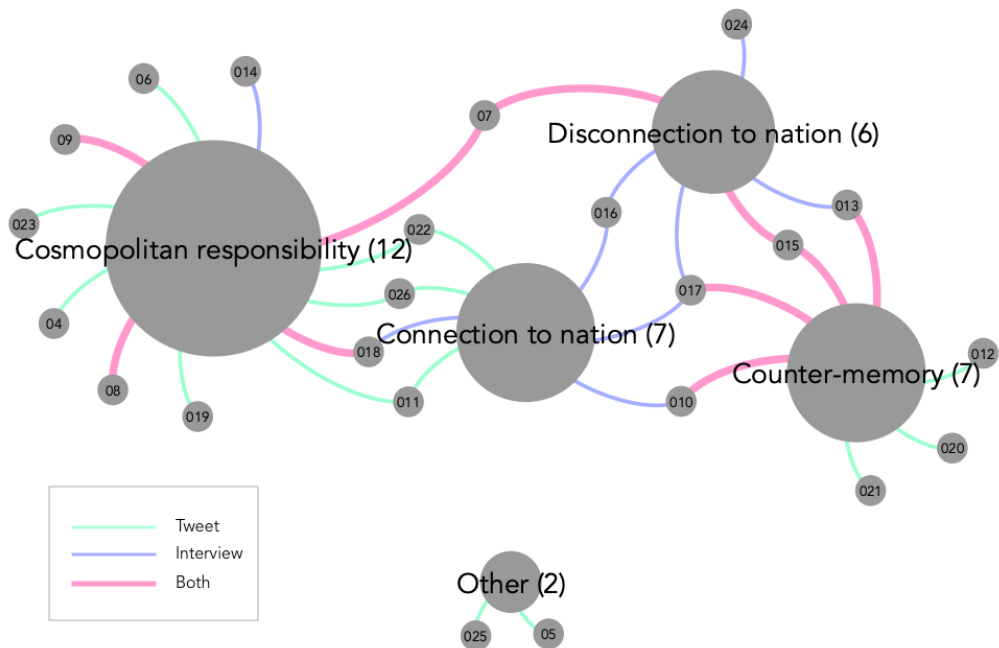
Especially with the 2016 election of Trump ... I feel I need to understand it. And you often see in the Norwegian newspapers that they are referencing the tweets from Twitter. But you can see it in real time if you're on Twitter yourself (P04).

The outsized role of U.S. politics was also echoed throughout the interviews. P05, a Norwegian physician, explained:

When you live in a very small country, you have to [follow U.S. politics] ... because it influences our own society to such a great degree (P05).

This provides some context for the prominence of George Floyd's death in the data material. All 23 participants addressed either his death or the subsequent protests in their tweet data, in their interview, or both. This data has been visualized in Figure 1, where each theme is connected to the participants who articulated it. Themes are sized according to the number of participants who articulated it; the proximity of certain themes to each other is the result of having participants in common.

Figure 1: Graph of participants' articulation of themes



Source: Author's data, graphed in Gephi. Numbers in parentheses are the number of participants who articulated each theme. Participants P25 and P05 are associated with "Other" because though they tweeted about George Floyd, none of the four themes were articulated in their tweets or interviews.

4.2 Theme 1: Cosmopolitan responsibility

The first participant to bring up the Floyd case in the interview was P08, a Norwegian woman with a large following on Twitter. She was discussing using Twitter to have some sort of impact on politics she cared about and said she wished she could join the BLM movement in the U.S.

Like I'm so impressed by the people protesting now and being out on the streets every single day. And I often get the feeling that I'm not doing enough. And this [tweeting] is what I can do. This is what I'm able to do from Norway (P08).

Such sentiments of wanting to feel a part of an effort were shared by other participants. P16, who is actively involved in Norwegian politics, learned about the incident from his English-language online networks and wrote about the incident in Norwegian. In contrast to P08, the Norwegian political commentator P16 was not trying to have an impact in the U.S., but rather bring the issue to Norway. "This is what I do," he said, "I try to take international discussions to Norway and present them to a Norwegian audience and hope that kind of can enrich the domestic discussion."

In these responses, we see the articulation of a cosmopolitan responsibility, a "logic of feeling and thinking that takes humanity, rather than nationality, as a primary frame of collective memory" (Saito, 2021: 224). In some cases, this is largely symbolic. In others, users try to take an active role from afar. For example, P09 is a Norwegian involved in "hacktivist" networks. He described joining forces with BLM-connected networks in the U.S. after Floyd's death:

We went from 1.7 million followers to over 8 million followers in under one week. So now we're working with them. And the biggest challenge to how to handle and teach 13, 14, 15-year-olds that want to save the world (P09).

Other users expressed a sense of collective solidarity. P07 is a Norwegian university student in her early 20s who mainly used Twitter to talk with her friends in other parts of Norway and Europe. She tweeted about the protests following Floyd's death:

I don't generally think destruction of property is right, but I sure as hell get that a rioting is the language of the unheard. The racism and taking of black lives has to have consequences. #BlackLivesMatter (tweet by P07)

During our interview, P07 described the way Twitter had introduced her to new concepts surrounding race, gender, and equality, including terms like intersectionality and systemic racism. She said Twitter gave her first-hand information about events like the Floyd case that she felt the Norwegian media didn't cover.

I get very frustrated and annoyed. Because, like you have discussions, and then you read the [Norwegian] news and it's people who are discussing if racism even exists. And it's like so far removed from the discussions we're having [on Twitter] and it feels like a step back (P07).

In tweets, participants also expressed a sense of "we" and universalization of Floyd's death and the subsequent protest movement. "Floyd's death wasn't just one incident of police violence," tweeted P22, "it was a symbol of racism everywhere."

4.3 Theme 2: Connection to nation

If the previous theme reflects what Octobre (2021) calls universalizing the particular, then the next theme moves more toward particularization of the universal. In interviews and tweets several months after Floyd's death, participants began articulating the event as not only a global or American one, but also as a national event.

The user who was perhaps most passionate about the issue was P18, Swedish woman who consults for Swedish government agencies. By the time of the interview with P18, she had added the BLM hashtag to her personal description on Twitter. She was asked about this during the interview:

Interviewer: You have the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter in your profile. I was curious why this is meaningful to you.

[Gasps] Oh, God. I watched the video of George Floyd calling for his mother. I cried. I really cried. [gets a little choked up] I could cry now. And it hurts so much, listening to [U.S. Attorney General] Barr and Trump saying that they don't have systemic racism in America, when we have the same racism here in Sweden! (P18)

The incident was still vivid to P18, but it was not just about Floyd's tragic death. The issue was about racism in both the United States *and* in her own country. In the interview, P18 was asked to elaborate on the connection she saw to Sweden, where deaths at the hands of police are highly unusual. P18 connected the issue to her own life and children:

You know, I didn't think the Swedish police were violent before. When I lived in my bubble. But then I have two sons, 24 and 20 years old, and they told me some stuff that I really didn't believe before.

Interviewer: So you're saying it's not that different?

No. And also, when the Black Lives Matter protest started in America, they also started here in Europe. In Stockholm, we had protesters. We had those in France, in different European countries. So I mean, there are Black people everywhere, and they have felt the same discrimination. Wherever they live. So, we have to deal with that. Everywhere. Not only in the States (P18).

The participant references the protests that had taken place in Oslo, Stockholm, and Copenhagen, along with other European capitals – in a way, becoming a form of local commemoration (Saito, 2021).

P16 noted that the BLM movement had become part of national political discourse, as well as discourse including within his own family:

When I wrote about Black Lives Matter, it was because I thought that nobody else was going to do that. And then that didn't turn out to be the case at all. ... And I have an 11 year old son, and he knows everything about Black Lives Matter now (P16).

P17, a Swedish man adopted as a child from central Africa, said that it was hard to speak about U.S. politics as being only that nation's politics; the debates around race that had started with the Trump presidency had helped made U.S. racial politics part of Swedish politics: "We're interlinked in a very special way."

In tweets in their national languages, participants spoke directly to fellow Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes:

We need a more honest debate on racism in Norway. We have widespread attitudes and structures that are racist. Yet we only talk about America (retweet by P16, translated by author)

If you think racism is only an American problem, then read this story by Sony Kapoor about his experiences in Denmark and other European countries #blacklivesmatter #racisimindenmark (tweet by P11, translated by author)

4.4 Theme 3: Disconnection to nation

However, some of the participants had reservations about the convergence of Scandinavian and American race politics – even some of those largely sympathetic to the BLM movement. For example, P07, the Norwegian university student, described a Twitter exchange she'd had about the Disney movie *Frozen* and the portrayal of a Sami character. The Sami are indigenous to northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. P07 spoke about the online exchange cautiously ("I don't feel 100 percent comfortable. I don't want to take the lead in this discussion because I'm not Sami myself" she explained.) But she recalled:

Someone had drawn the character from *Frozen* with very dark skin. ... And I think that might be a bit misguided. Because, as my friend [who's Sami] says, it's silly – she's very pale, but she's still part of an indigenous population. And people say it's because Americans don't understand that indigenous people can look white (P07).

Subjects in later interviews also described fatigue from the "reality show" of the American presidential race and the constant coverage of American political news in Scandinavian media. In an interview shortly after Biden's inauguration in 2021, P24, a Swedish man who studied theology, described frustration with the way American race politics had been brought into Swedish culture:

We have a different history over here -- because we haven't had slavery here as in America. So when you [apply U.S. race politics] you not only create issues that perhaps aren't there. And the nuances of what we should be talking about over here [local issues] is sort of overshadowed or over-coded by an analysis shaped in a vastly different context (P24).

P24 added that it's not that race struggles in the United States aren't important, "It's just, it's not our struggles."

4.5 Theme 4: Counter-memory

Despite the above mentioned reservations, many of the interview subjects described the death of George Floyd as an important global event. This was true of the subjects whose politics leaned right of center as well. However, some right-wing subjects articulated the memory in very different ways from those described above. This appeared especially among subjects originally chosen because they represent the small but vocal nationalist-leaning segment of Twitter in Scandinavia.

P15, for example, is a Norwegian corporate consultant. In July he tweeted out a video allegedly at a BLM rally in which a white woman was attacked. (Fact-checking sites later found the video was from 2014.) We discussed the tweet during the interview:

Imagine if there had there been a group of white people who treated a black person like that, it would have been riots. So [this tweet] is not from a racist motive, it's just – How far is this one-sided story going to be presented?

Interviewer: Do you think that this issue is relevant for Norway?

Yes. It becomes so. Because the whole thing about Black Lives Matter has been put on posters here in protests. For example, after the George Floyd killing, there was a huge gathering before the parliament in Norway – must be 50,000 people – with signs and all that. Black Lives Matter was then one of their slogans (P15).

The participant goes on to say that the thousands of people were allowed to gather despite the Covid-19 restrictions in place at the time. In that way, and in what he sees as a lack of publicity around BLM violence, P15 expresses sense of unfairness in the way BLM is treated. *This*, he argues, is the relevance for Norway. P15 separates the issue of George Floyd's death – which he describes as a "horrible thing" elsewhere in the interview – from the subsequent BLM protests. Later in the interview, he remembers being pulled over several times for speeding on his visits to the United States. "I know that when you're stopped by police in the States, you just sit still. You don't do anything."

Other users similarly sought to distinguish the tragedy of George Floyd's death from the cosmopolitan outpouring it had provoked. P10, a Swedish blogger, suggested the BLM movement was part of an election year tactic: "It's polarization. The thing around George Floyd has been used by the Democrats for partisan politics I would say."

For P13, a Swedish Twitter user known as a right-wing provocateur, the protests in Scandinavian countries were an expression of narcissism, masked as cosmopolitan concern. In the interview, we discussed a video he shared from a BLM protest in Gothenburg, Sweden. P13 laughed at a protester in the video:

That guy is standing and apologizing for being white. This could be a *Monty Python* sketch. Come on! Once again, they think that "I'm the good guy." You can even see in his face how good he feels standing there. ... And he's even standing there with his Africa shirt. It's like, *that* guy is a racist. For real. *He* is a racist. That is how a racist acts. That's how I see him (P13).

It was not uncommon for these users to turn the issue of memory around. Several tweeted in disbelief about the effort to remove Confederate flags and statues of historic figures. P20, a Danish attorney, tweeted that BLM was a "hateful" movement that favored "discrimination" against other (presumably white) people – an echo of the post-racial rhetoric favored by the American right (Banks, 2018).

Users in this segment of the right also tended to highlight a different aspect of violence – namely acts perpetrated or believed to be perpetrated by people at BLM rallies. P13, taking a more serious tone than above, warned of the lasting memories from witnessing violent acts. He compared riots in the U.S. to a personal experience from when he was a videographer overseas:

I was in Iraq and they killed two guys in front of me. I went back to my hotel room and sat for two days and did nothing. ... Nobody's prepared to see someone get killed. That's what I find so interesting about the riots [BLM protests] in the States – that people are so calm about the violence. They're like "it's just the leftists, it's okay, they're doing it for good cause." But no, they aren't. They are as bad as ISIS. Violence is violence. There is no good violence (P13).

For the participant, the association to witnessing death was not with the video of George Floyd, but with the videos of violence at BLM rallies.

Thus, for these participants, the collective memory was not about Floyd's death so much as what they saw as the brutal reaction to it. Notably, P17, the Swedish man born in central Africa, was the most conspiratorial about Floyd's death. In his interview he questioned Floyd's innocence, and suggested funding for BLM came from global elites seeking to divide people:

The worst wars are ethnic wars. No one wins. And it's a very dangerous situation because they're using people's ignorance to create fear. They're trying to make minority groups think that they are in a situation where the system wants to, or that police want to get away with shooting Black people. To hunt them down. I mean it's just lunatic. Crazy.

Interviewer: Are people ever surprised that you as a Black man are so critical of the Black Lives Matter movement?

I would say no, because it's so many people who are Black who see through this. We're not the loudest voices because the media select people who are loud, because maybe they want to clickbait or whatever. But it's a lot of us (P17).

In this last line, P17 invokes a transnational community of marginalized people who have a different view from the official writers of history. In the following section I will synthesize the major findings of this research and discuss their implications in relation to existing literature.

5. Discussion

Though it was known that the death of George Floyd gained international resonance, this paper has helped clarify the way that event was experienced and co-created by social media users. In doing so, the paper offers new insight into the process of cosmopolitan memory formation. Previous literature has proposed that democratic memory formation on social media is more rapid, more contested, and less bounded by the nation-state (Reading, 2011). The research presented here helps nuance these concepts in several ways, not the least by adding a cosmopolitan element as proposed by Levy and Sznajder (2002), though seldom applied to social media.

We see, for example, the way individuals a continent away learned quickly through their Twitter networks of the death of George Floyd, a local event in the Midwest region of the United States. The availability of the video online of his death meant that people in Scandinavia could "witness" the event in what Reading (2011) would call the same *modality* as Americans themselves. In this regard, memory formation of the videoed event was a globally shared experience, not dependent on elite news media, with social media providing means for collective and co-creative mnemonic practice (Saito, 2021).

Integral to this process is the understanding of who the collective is. Halbwachs argued that memory is collective not only because individuals make up a group, but because they are aware of their presence in the group (1992 [1952]: 40). We see this awareness in the participants' understanding of the event as shared – both at a global and a national level, and both online and offline. For example, the participants' frequent mention of the BLM demonstrations in their home countries and across Europe seem to serve as visualization proof for the imagined collective.

Of course, geographic context still matters. The Scandinavian countries have very different histories from the U.S. regarding race and multiculturalism. And as the participants describe in the interviews, they are at a remove from the issues and the heart of the citizen action in the weeks and months that follow Floyd's death. Yet we hear in at least some of the responses a sense of urgency and cosmopolitan responsibility. The desire to take part from afar calls up Levy and Sznajder's assertion that cosmopolitan memory is a "measure for humanist and universalist identifications" (2002: 88).

Moreover, some of the participants express a desire for an application of the cosmopolitan collective memory to the national collective (see Ryan, 2014). That is, they connect the killing of George Floyd to issues being discussed, or not discussed, in their own countries. Participants see the violence against Black citizens in the U.S. as similar or the same as threats facing minorities in their own country, incorporating the cosmopolitan memory of George Floyd into national assemblages of democratic memory (Misztal, 2005; Reading, 2011; Saito, 2021).

5.1 Strategies of combative counter-memory

The other major contribution of this paper is to document the counter-measures used in opposition to collective memory formation. Perhaps in reaction to Floyd becoming a global and national "political-cultural symbol" (Levy & Sznajder, 2002: 88), we see users on the radical right especially engage in what could be considered *combative counter-memory strategies*. I use "combative" here to convey a sense of urgency in the face of a still-developing conflict over how an event will be remembered; in other words, this is less a "transformation of history" as Foucault described, than a transformation in real-time (Neiger, Meyers & Zandberg, 2011). Even so, like Foucault's counter-memory, these strategies are still meant to address what the participants see as a hegemonic narrative, in this case coming from mainstream media and other elites. The term combative counter-memory thus diverges from the more passive "absence of complicity" that Ryan describes (2014: 511) or debates over historical facts in online counter-publics as documented by Birkner and Donk (2020).

With this distinction in mind, the strategies that surfaced in the interviews included

- re-nationalizing the incident to the U.S. –that is, situating it in a distinct and non-universal national context– or even a local context by pointing out that police killings are relatively rare even in the U.S.
- the uptake of audio-visual material that offer a depiction – or alleged depiction – of BLM events that countered the mainstream narrative. Audio-visual material, as Sánchez-Castillo and López-Olano (2021) write, can be a particularly potent form of “truth” telling on social media.
- transnational support for artefacts of previously hegemonic U.S. collective memory – especially Confederate statues and symbols. Removal of these is among the demands of the BLM movement (Mendes, 2021; Heersmink, 2021).³

However, one of the more complex forms of counter-memory was the use of memory assemblages. As described in the literature (Brendese, 2014; Garde-Hansen, 2011; Levy & Sznajder, 2002; Reading, 2011; Volkmer & Duffner, 2010), memories do not exist in isolation, but are associative. Reading has called this the “valency” of the memory, or “the extent to which memory assemblages through multiple discursive formations and material practices form bonds with other memory assemblages” (2011: 249). For example:

In the case of the witnessing of the Battle of Waterloo, at the time, these were primarily dialogical involving bonds to the event itself. With Neda, the witnessing assemblages were ‘polylogical’ and ‘polylectical’ with multiple bonds to other memory assemblages of other events (2011: 249).

This is to say that valency on social media, where everything is together with everything, is more dynamic. Participants thus put forth a counter-version that was equally focused on violence, but associated it less with violence against George Floyd and other Black Americans killed by police. Rather, it pivoted the theme of violence to riots associated with the BLM movement, which in turn were part of memory assemblages related to the Islamic State, crime in Swedish immigrant communities, and ethnic wars. Oddly, in a way this was also a cosmopolitanization of the original event, in that it drew universalized moral lessons from the events in the U.S. As P13 put it, “Violence is violence.”

Finally, it is also worth noting that resistance to the national application of George Floyd – or at least the political movement his death inspired – is not exclusive to those with nationalist ideologies. Without applying the above counter-memory strategies, P24 especially expressed reservations about the conflation of American and Swedish structural racism. This sentiment is somewhat anticipated by Ryan’s research, although unlike the case in Austria that Ryan studied, it does not appear that “recalcitrant national myths” (2014: 510) are responsible. (For example, a desire to maintain the egalitarian image of Scandinavia.) At least among the participants interviewed here, they instead expressed a weariness about imposing a prefab, American superstructure of “wokeness” in a way that might erase the root causes of Scandinavian countries’ own challenges with race, religion, and integration (see Lundby & Repstad, 2018).

6. Conclusion

Although the data material can only reflect the perspectives of the 23 people included here, the recurrence of certain themes helps construct a deeper understanding of democratic memory formation on social media.

In particular, the research presented here has provided richer empirical grounding for the theory of cosmopolitan memory formation, or what Saito calls, “how to remember what happened to foreign others” (2021: 230). Using an innovative approach of contemporaneous qualitative interviews supported by large-scale data collection, the paper documents the formation of collective memory of George Floyd’s death through online networks. It identifies themes of *cosmopolitan responsibility*, *connection to nation*, *disconnection to nation*, and *counter-memory*.

With regard to the first question (RQ₁) on how users understand the collective that “witnessed” Floyd’s death, we see an articulation of both a global collective, where local events become universal moral stories (Levy & Sznajder, 2002), as well as a national collective where the event of Floyd’s death is re-particularized to a Scandinavian context (Misztal, 2005; Octubre, 2021). This allows the event to be both universal and particular (Octubre, 2021). And in this regard, the findings illustrate the way Floyd’s death becomes more personal to users through memory assemblages (RQ₂) that include local protests, debates over race and ethnicity, and even participants’ children.

However, the rapidity and visibility of reactions on social media also mean oppositional users are ready to resist what Ryan (2014) calls the “superstructure” of cosmopolitan memory. The final contribution of

the paper (RQ_c) is the identification of counter-memory strategies (Foucault, 1977), made to be more immediate and *combative* through the structures of social media. The paper identifies strategies such as re-nationalizing the event, use of audio-visual "truth," and support for controversial historical artefacts. However, the most important was recasting the event in a way that emphasized the violence of BLM protesters rather than the violence against Floyd.

The findings demonstrate that social media can facilitate the rapid transnational formation of democratic memory, but also that this process is a contested one. In one sense, this is a democratization of democratic memory formation (Garde-Hansen, 2011) – in that users can witness events without mainstream media and take part in memory co-creation – but it also has implications for the cohesive nature of democratic memory, the stories that people tell about the past, and the way citizens make sense of their role in the future (Misztal, 2005).

Further research could explore how these dynamics play out in other contexts and on other platforms. It may be that larger European countries with fewer cultural ties to the U.S. may have different relationships to Floyd's death and other events. Users in countries such as France, Spain, and Italy that have extensive national media systems and rely less on global imports may also experience cosmopolitan memory differently online. Hopefully the methods and concepts described here can provide an opening for other qualitative and quantitative treatments.

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Notes

1. Additional research interviews were conducted prior to Floyd's death; for the purpose of this paper, this data has been omitted.

2. In accordance with Norwegian research data rules, individual participants will not be identified with a political affiliation. The wording of tweets has also been changed to protect user privacy.

3. These statues represented a kind of counter-memory themselves, erected decades after the Civil War, largely from 1890 to 1930 (AHA, 2017).

Appendix

NSD approvals for Big Data and interview data

Consent form for interview participants

Interview guide

Political classification key for the 2020 U.S. Election (Article 2)

Coding scheme and instructions for Swedish election content analysis (Article 3)

Code for geolocating Scandinavian and American users

Universitetet i Oslo
Att: Jessica Robinson
j.y.robinson@media.uio.no

Our date: 19.09.2018

Our ref.: 61532/EPA/LR

Your date:

Your ref.:

ASSESSMENT OF PROCESSING OF SPECIAL CATEGORIES OF PERSONAL DATA IN "NORDIC CITIZENS IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE: TRANSNATIONAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA"

In reference to the Notification Form sent to NSD - The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS on 16.07.2018. The notification concerns the processing of personal data for research purposes.

In accordance with our agreement with the data controller, the University of Oslo (UiO), NSD has carried out an assessment of the planned processing of personal data in accordance with data protection legislation.

The result of NSD's assessment:

NSD finds that you will be processing special categories of personal data, the political opinions of data subjects, until 30.06.2021.

NSD's assessment is that the processing of personal data will be in accordance with data protection legislation, and that the legal basis for processing personal data is public interest.

Our assessment presupposes that the project leader will process personal data in accordance with:

- The information given in the Notification Form and attachments
- Dialogue with NSD, and our assessment (see under)
- UiO's internal guidelines/routines for information security, including rules for which technical aids are allowed to be used
- UiO's guidelines for the use of a data processor

Basis for NSD's assessment:

1. Description of the planned processing of personal data

The purpose of this project is to investigate cross-border online political communication, with a focus on user practices in the Scandinavian region. Questions include how – and if – users take advantage of the global affordances online communication, and what the nature of these interactions means for the traditional definition of the public sphere.

The sample will consist of Twitter users who have published public Tweets (approximately 3,000,000 users).

The collected data will consist of public Tweets, including information about each Tweet and the Twitter user/author of the Tweet. Only public Tweets and user information that Twitter users have chosen to make public will be collected. Information that users have chosen to protect, or limit access to, will not be collected.

The data will be collected using the program DMI-TCAT, which uses the Streaming API on Twitter to gather tweets in real time, based on particular parameters. In this project the parameters will be keywords and hashtags related to elections and other public matters e.g. global summits, political movements, and globally significant elections, that involve users in the Scandinavian region interacting with users in other parts of the world.

A list of the variables that will be collected, and a list of the variables that will be further processed as part of the project, was received 19.09.2018. Variables that will not be used in the project will be deleted after data collection.

Variables that will be further processed in the project will include Tweet id number, when the Tweet was created (date and time), content of the Tweet (text), user name, user id number, screenname, user language, user description and location given in the user's public profile, tweet count, follower count etc.

During telephone correspondence, the project leader has explained in depth the necessity of processing each variable in this list, and the extent to which certain variables can lead to identification of individual Twitter users. It is necessary to collect information that can indicate the location of Twitter users in order to identify users that are based in Scandinavia. It is also necessary to collect unique identifiers for each Tweet and for each Twitter user in order to follow patterns of communication and carry out statistical analysis. Analysis will focus mainly on aggregated data but it may be necessary to analyse the content of tweets and follow interaction between users on an individual level.

The combination of user name, screen name, location and other information linked to individual Twitter users may be indirectly identifiable. In cases where Twitter users have published their real name it may be possible to directly identify individual persons. The collected data is likely to contain Tweets about the political opinions of Twitter users, which is considered a special category of personal data.

It may be necessary to publish quoted Tweets and authors' screennames in the thesis. The project leader has confirmed that this will only be relevant in the case of public figures who have published Tweets in the capacity of their public position. Otherwise the published data will be anonymous.

NSD understands that the data collected as part of master's project 49495: "All Politics is Global: Transnational political engagement in the 2016 U.S. election on Twitter" has been transferred to this project. This data also consists of public Tweets about political matters, which are indirectly identifiable and contain the political opinions of Twitter users.

Due to the amount of data that will be processed, and the likelihood that the political opinions of Twitter users will be included in the collected data, the following measures will be taken to reduce the potential impact on the rights and freedoms of data subjects:

1. User names, screennames and other data that may make it easier to identify individual users will only be processed for as long as is necessary. In later stages of analysis these data will be deleted where possible.

2. Only the project leader will have access to the collected data after it has been transferred to a server at UiO
3. Information security measures (see point 5)

Given these measures, NSD's assessment is that the overall impact of this processing of personal data for research purposes will be minimal. The collected data will be limited to information that Twitter users have chosen to make public. It is reasonable to assume that these users expect their public Tweets to reach a large audience, and that they anticipate that public Tweets might be used for purposes that they do not have control over, such as for research purposes. Moreover, the collected data will be processed for a relatively short period of time. NSD finds that the benefit to society of the processing of these personal data for research purposes exceeds the potential negative impact on the rights and freedoms of data subjects.

As a result of this assessment, we find that it is not necessary to carry out a Data Protection Impact Assessment for the processing of personal data in this project.

According to the Notification Form collected personal data will be processed until 30.06.2021.

2. Principles relating to processing personal data

NSD's assessment is that the processing is in accordance with the principles relating to processing personal data, since:

- personal data will be processed legally, fairly, and in a transparent manner in relation to the data subjects (see point 3 and 4)
- personal data will be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes (see point 1 and 3)
- processing will be adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary for the purpose of the project (see point 7)
- personal data will be stored in such a way that it is not possible to identify data subjects for longer than is necessary for the purpose of the project (see point 5 and 7)

3. Legal basis for processing personal data

NSD finds the planned processing of person data to be lawful, pursuant to the General Data Protection Regulation art. 6.1 e), art. 9.2 e) cf. the Personal Data Act §§ 8 and 9, on the grounds that:

- it is necessary in order to carry out a task in the public interest
- it is evident that the data subjects have made public their own personal data
- the benefit to society exceeds the potential negative impact on data subjects
- appropriate safeguards for the rights and freedoms of data subjects have been provided
- the researcher has fulfilled the requirement of consulting with a Data Protection Officer or equivalent

4. The rights of data subjects

NSD's assessment is that data subjects are entitled to exercise the right to:

- access their personal data that is being processed
- request that their personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of their personal data (data portability)

- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer of the data controller, or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority, regarding the processing of their personal data

NSDs assessment is that an exemption from the right to information can be made on the grounds that providing each data subject with information about the project would involve a disproportionate effort, and would not be possible in many cases; this because of the size of the sample and lack of contact information. In the case of public figures, where it may be easier to provide individual information, the benefit of receiving information can be seen as minimal due to the public position of these persons.

However, NSD strongly recommends that information about the project and the rights of data subjects is made publicly available on UiO's website.

Data subjects can exercise their rights, including request that their personal data is deleted, by contacting the project leader. We remind you that if a data subject contacts you about their rights, UiO has a duty to reply within a month. We presuppose that the project leader informs UiO as quickly as possible and that the institution has routines for how inquiries from data subjects will be followed up.

5. Information Security

According to the Notification Form, personal data will be collected from the internet using the program DMI-TCAT and then uploaded to a secure online server (based in the EU). Access to the data will only be available to the project leader through a secure login.

Collected data will then be transferred to a secure server at UiO. The project leader has confirmed that data storage will be clarified with the UiO's Data Protection Officer, and that an appropriate level of security will be decided upon (use of TSD, if necessary).

Only the project leader will have access to the collected data.

NSD presupposes that personal data are processed in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation and UiO's guidelines/routines for information security.

6. Data processor

According to the Notification Form, collected data will be stored on a cloud server in the EU as part of data collection. The cloud server will act as a data processor for the project. NSD presupposes that the project leader clarifies use of this data processor with UiO. The data controller has responsibility to ensure that use of a data processor is in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation art. 28. UiO must i.a. carry out a risk assessment, and if possible enter into a written agreement with the data processor about the processing of personal data, before the processing commences.

7. Duration

According to the notification form, personal data will be processed until 30.06.2021. Collected data that can be linked to individual data subjects will then be made anonymous.

Anonymising the collected data entails processing it in such a way that no individuals can be identified. This is done by:

- deleting user names, screen names and other unique online identifiers
- deleting/categorizing location, date and time, and other background information
- deleting/editing tweets so that they can no longer be linked to individual Twitter users

UiO must be able to demonstrate/document that the collected data has been anonymised.

Notifying changes to the project

If you intend to make changes to the processing of personal data, it may be necessary to notify NSD via 'Min Side'. You can find information on our website about which changes should be notified. Do not carry out the change until you have received a reply from us.

Information about processing is published on 'Min side', 'Meldingsarkivet' and our website

All relevant information and documentation is available:

- via 'Min side' (My Page) for researchers, supervisors and students
- via 'Meldingsarkivet' (notification archive) for employees at UiO with internal auditing tasks


NSD will contact you regarding the status for processing personal data

In accordance with our agreement with UiO, NSD will follow up the processing of personal data at the end of the project.

We will send a written inquiry to the project leader and ask for a written reply to the status for processing personal data.

Look at our website or contact us if you have questions. Good luck with the project.

Best wishes


Marianne Høgetveit Myhren
Head of Section



Eva J B Payne
Adviser

Reference to legislation

NSD's assessment is that the planned processing of personal data:

- is regulated by the Personal Data Act, cf. § 2.
- complies with the following principles in the General Data Protection Regulation:
 - lawfulness, fairness and transparency cf. art. 5.1 a)
 - purpose limitation cf. art. 5.1 b)
 - data minimisation cf. art. 5.1 c)
 - storage limitation cf. art. 5.1 e).
- may take place pursuant to the General Data Protection Regulation art. 6.1 e), art. 9.2 e) cf. the Personal Data Act §§ 8 and 9.

The researcher can be exempted from the duty to give information about the processing of personal data, cf. art. 14.5 b).

NSD presupposes that the data controller also ensures that the processing of personal data is carried out in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation:

- art. 5.1 d) and art. 5.1. f), and art. 32 regarding information security
- art. 26-29 for use of a data processor

NSD NORSK SENTER FOR FORSKNINGSDATA

NSD sin vurdering

Prosjekttittel

Nordic Citizens in the Global Village: Transnational political participation on social media

Referansenummer

869664

Registrert

19.03.2020 av Jessica Yarin Robinson - jessicyr@uio.no

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Universitetet i Oslo / Det humanistiske fakultet / Institutt for medier og kommunikasjon

Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)

Jessica Robinson, j.y.robinson@media.uio.no, tlf: [REDACTED]

Type prosjekt

Forskerprosjekt

Prosjektperiode

24.03.2020 - 15.01.2022

Status

29.04.2020 - Vurdert

Vurdering (1)

29.04.2020 - Vurdert

BACKGROUND

The processing of personal data in notification form 869664 is a part of the project "Nordic Citizens in the Global Village: Transnational political participation on social media" notified to NSD on 16.07.2018 under project number 61532. The assessment of the processing of personal data under project number 61532 was sent on 21.09.2018.

The following assessment is for the processing of personal data registered in notification form 869664.

ASSESSMENT

Our assessment is that the processing of personal data will comply with data protection legislation, so long as it is carried out in accordance with what is documented in the Notification Form and attachments, dated 29.04.2020, as well as in correspondence with NSD. Everything is in place for the processing to begin.

NOTIFY CHANGES

If you intend to make changes to the processing of personal data in this project it may be necessary to notify NSD. This is done by updating the Notification Form. On our website we explain which changes must be notified. Wait until you receive an answer from us before you carry out the changes.

TYPE OF DATA AND DURATION

The project will be processing special categories of personal data about political and philosophical opinions, and general categories of personal data, until 15.01.2022. The collected personal data will then be stored at UiO for verification, follow-up studies, or archiving for future research until 2030.

LEGAL BASIS

The project will gain consent from data subjects to process their personal data. We find that consent will meet the necessary requirements under art. 4 (11) and 7, in that it will be a freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous statement or action, which will be documented and can be withdrawn.

The legal basis for processing special categories of personal data is therefore explicit consent given by the data subject, cf. the General Data Protection Regulation art. 6.1 a), cf. art. 9.2 a), cf. the Personal Data Act § 10, cf. § 9 (2).

New consent will be gained for processing for new purposes after the end of the project.

PRINCIPLES RELATING TO PROCESSING PERSONAL DATA

NSD finds that the planned processing of personal data will be in accordance with the principles under the General Data Protection Regulation regarding:

- lawfulness, fairness and transparency (art. 5.1 a), in that data subjects will receive sufficient information about the processing and will give their consent
- purpose limitation (art. 5.1 b), in that personal data will be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes, and will not be processed for new, incompatible purposes
- data minimisation (art. 5.1 c), in that only personal data which are adequate, relevant and necessary for the purpose of the project will be processed
- storage limitation (art. 5.1 e), in that personal data will not be stored for longer than is necessary to fulfil the project's purpose

THE RIGHTS OF DATA SUBJECTS

Data subjects will have the following rights in this project: transparency (art. 12), information (art. 13), access (art. 15), rectification (art. 16), erasure (art. 17), restriction of processing (art. 18), notification (art. 19), data portability (art. 20). These rights apply so long as the data subject can be identified in the collected data.

NSD finds that the information that will be given to data subjects about the processing of their personal data will meet the legal requirements for form and content, cf. art. 12.1 and art. 13.

We remind you that if a data subject contacts you about their rights, the data controller has a duty to reply within a month.

FOLLOW YOUR INSTITUTION'S GUIDELINES

NSD presupposes that the project will meet the requirements of accuracy (art. 5.1 d), integrity and confidentiality (art. 5.1 f) and security (art. 32) when processing personal data.

Zoom, Skype for Business, and Microsoft Teams will be used to conduct interviews and will therefore be data processors for the project. NSD presupposes that the processing of personal data by a data processor meets the requirements under the General Data Protection Regulation arts. 28 and 29.

To ensure that these requirements are met you must follow your institution's internal guidelines and/or consult with your institution (i.e. the institution responsible for the project).

FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT

NSD will follow up the progress of the project at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data is being carried out in accordance with what is documented.

Good luck with the new part of the project!

Contact person at NSD: Eva J B Payne
Data Protection Services for Research: +47 55 58 21 17 (press 1)

Nordic citizens in the 'global village': Transnational political participation on social media

Information on research participation

Lead researcher: Jessica Yarin Robinson, University of Oslo
Contact: j.y.robinson@media.uio.no

This is a formal request for your participation in a research project seeking to learn more about online political communication. The focus of the project is the use of social media, and Twitter in particular, in ways that cross traditional political boundaries.

As part of this project, I am conducting qualitative interviews with Twitter users and have requested your participation. The information collected in these interviews are considered *personal data* and are therefore subject to standards of personal data consent and handling. In this letter I will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve. At the end of the letter is a consent form that we will both sign.

Purpose of the project

This project is part of a PhD dissertation that investigates cross-border online political communication, with a focus on users in the Scandinavian region. It aims to probe the common idea of the internet as a “global village” and understand how users take advantage of the cross-border features of digital communication.

As part of this project, interviews will be conducted with people who communicate in online networks on the platform Twitter. These interviews are intended to gain more insight into online use patterns by asking users directly to describe, in their own words, their motivations and experiences, and reflect on the themes of the research project. This is an important part of the project because it will shed light on quantitative data that numbers alone cannot explain.

Findings from the interviews will also be reported in academic journal papers and in presentations at academic conferences, as well as in articles and presentations intended for a general audience. As described in this letter, you will not be identifiable in any publication or presentation unless you give explicit permission. That consent is separate from the consent to participate that is sought here.

Who is responsible for the research project?

The University of Oslo’s Department of Media and Communication, located at Gaustadalléen 21, 0349 Oslo, Norway, is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

I have used a “big data” approach to scrape tweets from Twitter and map networks on the platform created by interactions between users. (This data, handled securely under NSD project number 61532, is being processed on the legal basis of scientific research purposes.¹) Based on these networks, I have

¹ GDPR Art. 9(2)(j), cf. Art. 6(1)(e)

identified accounts that hold prominent positions or play key roles in information flows in the networks – including your account. I am reaching out to users for interviews in the hopes of better understanding users' experiences.

What does participation involve for you?

Participation in this project entails a personal interview lasting approximately 45 minutes. This interview will be recorded so that answers can be preserved accurately. Interview questions cover the following areas:

- *Your motivations and experiences as a user of Twitter, including your reasons and approach to posting and interacting on the platform*
- *Your experience as a participant in political discussions and your views on the properties of the platform for political interactions*
- *Your views on and experience with the global accessibility of content on Twitter and how you think of your role on Twitter*

Participation is voluntary

Participation in this project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

Your personal data will be processed only for the scientific purposes covered in this letter. The data will be treated confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

Only I as the lead researcher will have access to the recorded interviews, transcripts, notes, and analysis. Interviews will be conducted on Zoom, Skype for Business, or Microsoft Teams under data protection agreements between these platforms and the University of Oslo. In order to ensure that no unauthorized persons are able to access the interview data, interview audio will be recorded using an external, non-networked recording device. The interview data will be stored on a secure server at the University of Oslo's Services for Sensitive Data (TSD). Your identifying information (name, Twitter handle, and contact information) will be de-linked from the interview data and stored separately.

Publication of data

Data gathered from the interviews will be used for scientific purposes. This includes articles in scientific journals and presentations at academic conferences, as well as articles and presentations intended to reach a the wider public.

Under the terms of your consent agreement, you will not be identifiable in any written or oral publication. If I believe that including identifiable information in a publication is relevant, I will contact you and request written authorization to use that information. That authorization is separate from this consent agreement.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The current project is scheduled to end in 2022. Collected data (interview recordings, transcripts, and notes) will be stored for verification, follow-up studies, or archiving for future research until 2030. If it becomes necessary to use the stored personal data for new purposes after this point, then new consent will be requested.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer at the University of Oslo or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

The Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) through an agreement with the University of Oslo has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation. We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- Jessica Yarin Robinson via email at j.y.robinson@media.uio.no or by telephone at [REDACTED]
- Our Data Protection Officer: Roger Markgraf-Bye, personvernombud@uio.no
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email at personverntjenester@nsd.no or by telephone at (+47) 55 58 21 17.

Sincerely,

Jessica Yarin Robinson
Doctoral Research Fellow
University of Oslo, Department of Media and Communication
Oslo, Norway

Nordic citizens in the 'global village': Transnational political participation on social media

Consent form

- I confirm that I understand these instructions and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I understand that the interview will be used for academic research.
- I understand that the audio from the interview will be recorded.
- I give consent for my interview to be stored until 2030.
- I wish to participate in the project (Nordic Citizens in the Global Village).

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Jessica Yarin Robinson

Name of researcher

Date

Signature

Interview Guide – updated 13.07.2020

Nordic citizens in the global village: Transnational political participation on social media

Researcher: Jessica Yarin Robinson, University of Oslo, j.y.robinson@media.uio.no

This is a loose guide – it doesn't need to be followed in this order and not all questions are necessary. The guide is meant to ensure that comparable information is obtained from informants.

Informant ID:

On Twitter since:

First make sure recordings of participant and of myself have started.

CAN YOU FIRST CONFIRM THAT IT'S OK THAT I RECORD THE AUDIO? []

Lock meeting to other participants.

Background: [don't need to ask all these questions – just make sure I have the correct information]

Age and gender

Day job

Country of origin and current country

(If not in country of birth) What brought you to [current country]?

Other countries lived in

Twitter origin story: Why they joined; what they use it for now; how it changed

Why did you start using Twitter? ... Who did you initially start following on Twitter?
... What topics were you interested in?

[THEMATIC] Did you see it as a way to connect to the world?

Evolution: How has that changed? ... What topics and types of users do you follow now?

Present times:

Why do you use Twitter now?

What do you use Twitter for compared with other platforms?

What topics are you interested in? What do you tweet about?

Are you interested in international politics? Which other countries?

How would you describe the network or networks you're part of on Twitter?

Interactive: Choose example tweet or tweets ahead of time. Have participant talk about why they tweeted about that topic; tweeted in that way; tweeted in that language.

What was your goal with this tweet?

This can be done whenever it seems natural in the interview.

Language: What the significance of language choice is

When you tweet, how do you decide what language to tweet in?

What makes you tweet in English as opposed to [other language]?

What sort of content do you post in [other language]? Why not tweet it in English?

Why tweet in [Scan language] when [Norwegians/Swedes/Danes] understand English?

Motivation and audience: Who is their audience, what does the user see has their role, what issues do they care about

What sort of content would a follower expect to see?

What do you hope your followers get out of your tweets?

[THEMATIC: WHAT PROBLEMS DO YOU SEE YOURSELF BRINGING TO LIGHT?]

What would you say your goal is when you tweet about politics? (Persuasion? To bring attention to a problem? inform? To gain followers? To blow off steam?)

Purpose of RTs?

[THEMATIC: IMAGINED COMMUNITIES] Who do you imagine as the audience for your tweets/retweets?

(Are there multiple audiences? Different audiences for different tweets?)

Who do you want your audience to be?

What do you get from Twitter that you can't get from national media? [*idea that Twitter offers a place for people with views marginalized by their country's mainstream*]

What do you personally get out of Twitter?

Have you ever felt like you've had some sort of effect? [depending on what the person's goal is]

Globality and identity: How do they move between national and global spheres; what advantages do they see to global affordances of Twitter

Do you think about your tweets being accessible to anyone in the world? ... Does this shape the way you tweet?

Do you *try* to reach audiences outside Norway/Sweden/Denmark?

Who and where is the audience for these tweets?

If the audience is outside the country, what role do you see yourself playing?

Do you see Twitter as global?

I've read some scholars who say that it's contradictory for nationalists to build transnational networks. What do you think of that? Do you think it's contradictory?

Lightning round!

Do you use **hashtags**?

Do you look at the location field on people's profiles on Twitter?

Do you use DMs or DM groups?

COVID-19: HAVE YOU BEEN READING ABOUT CORONA NEWS ON TWITTER?

World Values Survey 1

(Show Card AF)

People have different views about themselves and how they relate to the world. Using this card, would you tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about how you see yourself? (Read out and code one answer for each statement):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
V212. I see myself as a world citizen.	1	2	3	4
V213. I see myself as part of my local community.	1	2	3	4
V214. I see myself as part of the [French]* nation.	1	2	3	4
V215. I see myself as part of the [European Union]**	1	2	3	4
V216. I see myself as an autonomous individual.	1	2	3	4

* [Substitute your country's nationality for "French"]

** [Substitute appropriate regional organization for "European Union"]

Tweet Political Classification Key

Tweet classification	Examples
<p><u>pro-Trump</u> expresses support of or makes the case for Trump</p>	<p>praise for Trump, calls to action to vote for Trump, retweeting @realDonaldTrump's self-promoting tweets, sharing opinions in favor of Trump, support for Trump's positions, campaign hashtags (#MAGA, #KAG, #TrumpTrain, #TrumpPence2020, #DrainTheSwamp, #WWG1WGA), use of "Deplorable" in profile information</p>
<p><u>pro-Biden</u> expresses support of or makes the case for Biden</p>	<p>praise for Biden/Harris ticket, calls to action to vote for Biden, retweeting @JoeBiden or Harris self-promoting tweets, sharing opinions in favor of Biden/Harris, support for Biden's positions, campaign hashtags (#VoteBlue, #BidenHarris), cheering Biden win</p>
<p><u>anti-Trump</u> expresses opposition to or makes the case against Trump</p>	<p>criticism or mockery of Trump or Trump supporters/surrogates, retweeting @JoeBiden tweets that are solely attacks on Trump, unflattering comparisons to other disliked people, tweets that explicitly say Trump is worse than Biden, tweeting information aimed at discrediting Trump</p>
<p><u>anti-Biden</u> expresses opposition to or makes the case against Biden</p>	<p>criticism or mockery of Biden or Biden supporters/surrogates, retweeting @realDonaldTrump tweets that are solely attacks on Biden, unflattering comparisons to other disliked people, tweets that explicitly say Biden is worse than Trump, tweeting information aimed at discrediting Biden</p>
<p><u>neither</u> expresses opposition to both candidates or explicit support of a third-party candidate</p>	<p>tweets explicitly saying both candidates are equally bad, or that the user won't vote for either candidate or will vote for a third party</p>
<p><u>unknown/Informational</u> expresses no clear political position OR tweets is not intelligible</p>	<p>tweets about the horserace (odds, turnout, result), jokes about the entertainment value of the election, jokes about the candidates' appearance/outfit, apolitical memes and videos, "what a crazy world we live in" tweets, apolitical get-out-the-vote messages, a mix of tweets that are supportive of both candidates</p>

User Political Classification Key

User classification	Criteria
<u>pro-Trump</u>	presence of one or more pro-Trump tweets; no contradictory tweets
<u>pro-Biden</u>	presence of one or more pro-Biden tweets; no contradictory tweets
<u>anti-Trump</u>	presence of one or more anti-Trump tweets; no contradictory tweets
<u>anti-Biden</u>	presence of one or more anti-Biden tweets; no contradictory tweets
<u>neither</u>	presence of one or more neither tweets; no contradictory tweets
<u>unknown/Informational</u>	absence of any of the above tweets OR contradictory tweets

Notes:

It can be hard to tell the difference between pro-Biden and anti-Trump because Trump is the incumbent and one of the arguments FOR Biden is to get rid of Trump.

(e.g. this Trump supporter makes a good point: "I never seen anything about pro biden just anti trump")

In accordance with the guidelines though, I consider calls to action to vote for Biden as pro-Biden. For example:

This tweet, (retweet of Biden) I consider pro-Biden:

<https://twitter.com/ishton/status/1313837968961024001>

But this tweet is anti-Trump:

<https://twitter.com/isabellabisbjerr/status/1316046227251834880>

and:

<https://twitter.com/lycanwolves/status/1321854219767435264>

and:

@theseanhavens By wanting to keep trump in power - because its a bad faith argument to say not voting for biden at this point isnt doing exactly that - you are saying that what

he has done/will do isnt scary enough for you. I dont want to vote for Biden either. But i like democracy more.

And even some of Joe Biden's own tweets:

RT @JoeBiden: Wear a mask. Wash your hands. Vote out Donald Trump.”

And:

RT @JoeBiden: You have the power to silence him. Vote: <https://t.co/eoxT07u1l9>

<https://t.co/z1JUQEWlyx>

2018 Swedish election – English tweets coding key v4.0

revised 27.08.19

	Code	Description
1	NationalistRise	<p>The tweet puts emphasis on the <i>success</i> or <i>expected success</i> of SD in the election (either by name or referencing the party through description, e.g. “Sweden’s nationalist party” or “populists in Sweden” or “Sweden’s far right”).</p> <p>Note that this is not merely the <i>mention</i> of SD – it must emphasize the ascendance of the party or nationalism/populists/etc.</p>
2	Horserace	<p>The tweet puts emphasis on updates on who’s winning and losing. <i>Election period</i>: Tweets showing poll results, reporting voter turnout, or reporting results of the election. <i>Post-election period</i>: Updates on government formation, results of no-confidence votes, and other updates on developments.</p> <p>Frequent words: “political blocs”, “stalemate”, “gridlock”, “deadlock”, “neck and neck”</p> <p>Journalistic guides, explainers on the vote, and live coverage also fall into this category.</p> <p>Note that not all NationalistRise tweets are also Horserace tweets. Tweets that focus on SD’s success or projected success are NationalistRise; they are also Horserace if they rank SD in relation to at least one other party.</p>
3	Violence	<p>The tweet puts emphasis on reports of violence, threats of violence, rape, terrorism, or other violent crime.</p>
4	HistoricUpheaval	<p>The tweet puts emphasis on the historic nature of the election (e.g. “could end 100 years of dominance”, “most uncertain election <u>yet</u>”) or the permanent mark it will leave on Sweden (e.g. “tectonic shift”, “changed the most stable party system in Europe”, “rewrite the rule book”).</p> <p>Note that describing the election as “tumultuous”, “messy” or predicting “weeks without a government” is NOT sufficient (these are more likely Horserace).</p>
5	Migration	<p>The tweet puts emphasis on immigration policy, im/migrants, refugees, Islam (as implicit to migration in Sweden), or multiculturalism. This includes references to Sweden as “Swedistan” by right-leaning users. Tweets that mention “globalists” may also be referencing migration policies.</p> <p>This also applies where SD is referred to as the “anti-immigration party,” but <i>not</i> when describing the “racist” or “Nazi” roots of the party. (See Racism.)</p>
6	DebateDistortion	<p>The tweet puts emphasis on external factors: Russian or other foreign interference, fake news, or YouTube/Facebook manipulating content.</p>
7	ElectoralFailure	<p>The tweet puts emphasis on internal factors: voter fraud, public corruption to influence election, unfair treatment of certain parties, unfair voting rules, government website crashes, or other institutional failures that would impact the results.</p>
8	GlobalPolitics	<p>The tweet puts emphasis on a relationship between the Swedish election and</p>

		<p>politics in places – e.g. Europe, the UK, the EU, the West, the world. The user may also compare Swedish politics to politics elsewhere (e.g. Brexit, Trump, Theresa May, Republicans, Tories, #MAGA, #Qanon, etc.).</p>
9	WelfareState	<p>The tweet puts emphasis on Sweden’s welfare state. Tweets fall into this category if they mention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the term <i>welfare</i> or the <i>welfare system/state/society/model</i> - taxes or a specific welfare benefit (e.g. healthcare or pensions) <p>Note also that general references to the economy, work, or workers (e.g. “migrants who refuse to work or contribute to society”) are NOT sufficient for this category.</p>
10	UtopiaDystopia	<p>The tweet puts emphasis on Sweden as a model leftist country. This may be in a positive or negative light. Tweets meet the criteria for this category if they mention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sweden’s image as <i>leftist, liberal, or progressive, open</i>, or similar - the terms <i>socialism</i> or <i>communism</i> in connection to Swedish society - the term Swedish <i>model</i> or social democratic <i>model</i> <p>Note that use of the terms socialist, communist, leftist or similar to identify specific parties is NOT sufficient for this category.</p>
11	Counternarrative	<p>The tweet puts emphasis on the idea that the media or dominant narrative sensationalizes, exaggerates, or ignores some aspect of the election.</p>
12	Environment	<p>The tweet puts emphasis on climate change, wildfires, or other environmental issue.</p> <p>Note that <i>mention</i> of the Green party is not sufficient; the tweet must emphasize the party’s environmental policies.</p>
13	Racism	<p>The tweet puts emphasis on racism in Swedish politics by describing SD or supporters as: <u>racists</u>, <u>Nazis</u>, <u>neo-Nazis</u>, having <u>Nazi roots</u>, or <u>white supremacists</u> (or associated ideologies – racism, Nazism, white supremacy, etc.) This also includes tweets that highlight a quote from a New York Times story: “I’m not a racist, but ...”</p> <p>Note that this is NOT for tweets that express racist views themselves, but rather for tweets that emphasize racism in Swedish politics.</p> <p>Note that the terms “far right” and “xenophobe” are NOT sufficient. (For these tweets, see if NationalistRise or Migration applies.)</p>
14	Rooting	<p>The tweet puts emphasis on rooting for a political “team” or encouraging voter turnout. The tweeter may use phrases like “you,” “us,” or “we” (e.g. “let’s hope” and “we conservatives”) or use the imperative tense (e.g. “vote conservatively” or “don’t vote for the liberals.”)</p> <p><i>Before or on Sept. 9:</i> The tweeter urges support for a particular side in the election, expresses personal hope or fear of a particular outcome, encourages Swedes to vote in general, or is a Swede who reported how they are voting.</p> <p><i>After Sept. 9:</i> User expresses celebration or disappointment about the result.</p>

		Note that this applies to <i>expressions of personal support within the tweet</i> . Tweets sharing links to analysis on why an outcome is good/bad do NOT fall in this category.
15	Financial	The tweet puts emphasis on the election's impact or potential impact on global markets, investments, the SEK, etc. Financial news, in other words.
16	Other	Emphasis of tweet not captured by the above categories. This includes tweets that are only about campaign issues not listed above, are not about the election at all, are apolitical jokes about politicians, are not in English, or cannot be deciphered by the coder due to lack of context. (Use only when tweet qualifies for none of the other categories.)

NB! Keep in mind that some tweets may mention certain themes, or link to media or other tweets that emphasize certain themes, in order to *contradict* them, rather than to amplify these themes. For example:

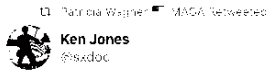
- (1) #SwedenElection: No far-right explosion unlike what was predicted by international medias, many still running with such headlines. The vast, vast majority of voters did NOT vote for the far-right. WHY is international media failing to report THAT story?
- (2) @JamesHa93744689 @sdriks @socialdemokrat There are no neo-nazis in the Swedish Elections. Only those on the lunatic fringe Left would say something so dangerous and hurtful. Sweden Democrats are against fascists and nazis. Give me a break.

The coder should consider what the *user* is emphasizing about the election, not the emphasis they are *critiquing*. In the first example, the user is *critiquing* NationalistRise; in the second, the user is *critiquing* Racism. Thus, these tweets should be coded as Counternarrative.

Instructions

The coder is assessing the presence or absence of each emphasis described. A tweet can have multiple emphases and therefore multiple codes. (The exception is Other, which should only be used if the tweet fits no other category.)

For each tweet, click on the **URL to the original tweet** to read the tweet in the Twitter interface and make an assessment. **For retweets: Because of changes to Twitter's interface, retweets are often cut off (ending with an ellipsis ...). Therefore, the coder must view the "embed" version. This is done by double-clicking the down arrow in the upper right corner:**



RT : Angry Migrants Punch Anti-Immigrant Party Member in Face at Swedish Rally -- Migrant Mob Chases Them Down Street (VIDEO); Open B...



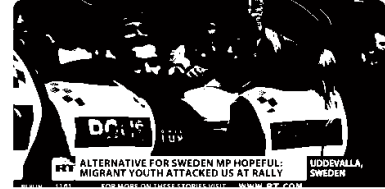
Angry Migrants Punch Anti-Immigrant Party Member in Face at Swedish Rally -- ...
They're assimilating well in Sweden, no? Angry migrants punched an Alternative for Sweden (AFS) party member Markus Jonsson in the face today at a rally. Th...
thegatewaystoday.com

6:09 PM - Sep 2, 2018

>>>>



Angry Migrants Punch Anti-Immigrant Party Member in Face at Swedish Rally -- Migrant Mob Chases Them Down Street (VIDEO); Open Border Liberals Want This In America; IMMIGRANTS MUST EARN CITIZEN RIGHTS, NOT DEMAND #BuildTheWall #PatriotsUnited
thegatewaystoday.com/2018/09/angry-...



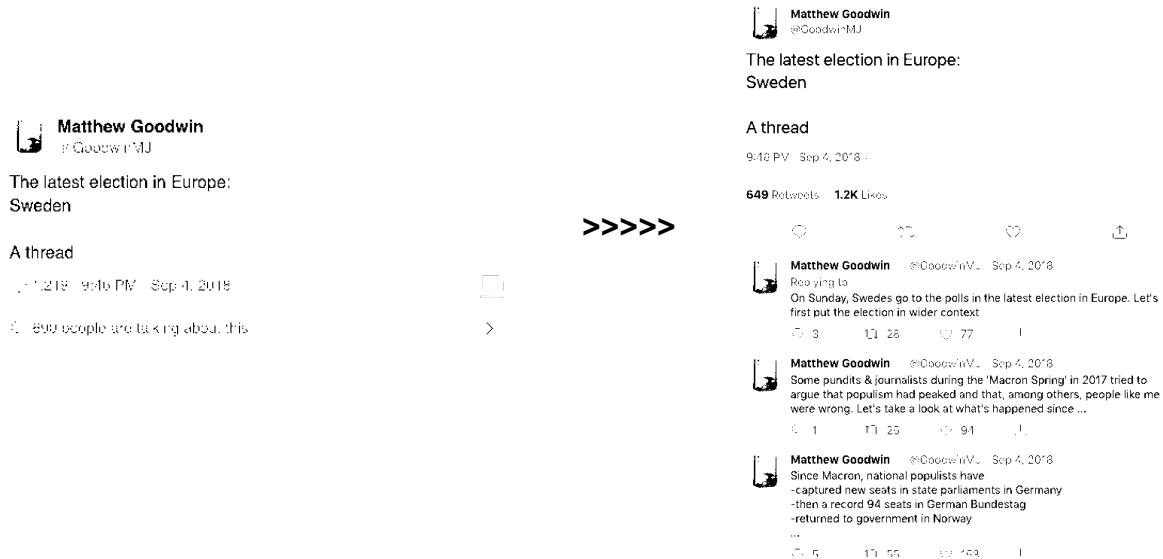
Angry Migrants Punch Anti-Immigrant Party Member in Face a...
They're assimilating well in Sweden, no? Angry migrants punched an Alternative for Sweden (AFS) party member Markus Jonsson in the

6:09 PM - Sep 2, 2018

For additional elements, use the following procedures.

- *Tweets that contain links to English-language news articles or blog posts:* The content visible in the preview on the Twitter interface is considered part of the tweet. In cases where the text in the preview is cut off the coder can click on the link to finish the headline or sentence. Note that content in Swedish or other languages may be considered for *context* to better understand the tweet, but should not add additional codes based on the content alone.
- *Tweets with embedded images or tweets:* As with the previews of news articles, these are considered part of the tweet. In cases where a preview is not available or hard to read, the coder may click on the embedded tweet or image. Consider the context though: in some cases, **the user may be critiquing the embedded tweet or image.** (See NB! above.)
- *Tweets that contain videos:* If the video is playable from the Twitter interface, the coder should view the first 45 seconds of the video. This is considered part of the tweet.
- *Tweets that are part of threads:* The coder assesses only the tweet collected. If the meaning of the tweet is not clear, other tweets in the thread may be read to understand *context*, but the content of these should not add additional codes. **Note: Because of the changes to Twitter's interface, the coder must click**

through to the embed version, as shown above, and then click on the date to see the tweet thread. Like so:



- *Tweets that are **replies** to other tweets:* The coder should not incorporate the *content* of the previous tweets in making a coding assessment, but can read the previous tweets to help understand the *context* of the tweet in question. **Follow the same procedure above for threads to see the previous tweets.**

Tweets that are no longer available

Some tweets are no longer available online. This can be due to the user deleting the tweet or their account, changing their privacy settings, or Twitter suspending the user.

In these cases, read the text available in the spreadsheet AND click on **URL embedded in tweet**. This link may still work and redirect to the tweet that the user is commenting on or retweeting. Or, the link may redirect to a video, article, or blogpost. In the case of news articles or blogposts, the coder should use only the main headline for coding purposes. In the case of YouTube videos, follow the same 45 second rule as above. This of course is in addition to coding the tweet text available in the spreadsheet.

Unavailable tweets that are cut off in the spreadsheet: Unfortunately, the full text of retweets is often truncated in the spreadsheet (indicated by an ellipsis ...). For example:

RT @NeonV6: #Swedenelections The Main Swedish election website for the results is down apparently. Also they are saying that th... <https://t.co/tGmXayMGJP>

If these tweets are no longer available through the **URL to original tweet**, *and* the **URL embedded in tweet** does not redirect to the original tweet, go to the **Frequently Retweeted** tab at the bottom of the spreadsheet. Do a text search (⌘ + f) for a phrase in the tweet text to try to find the full original tweet. For the above tweet, the coder could search for “Main Swedish election website”, which finds the following tweet in its original form:

#Swedenelections The Main Swedish election website for the results is down apparently. Also they are saying that there is far longer delays for counting the results. This raises serious concerns that the fix is in by the Swedish & EU Establishment to try & keep control of Sweden

Code for geolocating Scandinavian and American users

Available at <https://github.com/johannessweater/cosmopolitans>