

Understanding mobilization on social media:**Methodological approaches to activists' affective and networking practices**

4 – 5 July, 2024

Freie Universität Berlin

Social media have become a crucial site for local as well as transnational mobilizations of activist and protest movements. Traditionally marginalized groups are enabled to make “affective claims to agency” (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 119) and disrupt hegemonic discourses, as displayed by cases of, for example, antiracist, trans, and feminist activism on social media (Jackson et al., 2020). These intersecting movements have been addressed as the fourth wave of feminism, cyberfeminism, networked, and hashtag-feminism (Clark-Parsons, 2022; Gajjala & Oh, 2012; MacDonald et al., 2022; Natansohn, 2023). On the other hand, self-declared Men’s Rights Activists, the alt/far right, and anti-gender groups are hijacking feminist and anti-racist mobilizations online (Kosenko et al., 2019, Knüpfer et al., 2020), creating their own cross-platform and transnational networks often referred to as the “manosphere” (Ging, 2019; Rothermel, 2020).

Furthermore, social media researchers have shown how affect and emotions shape and permeate activists’ media practices as well as their mobilization patterns and strategies in various ways (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012; Schultermandl, 2022; Sundén & Paasonen, 2019). Different issue-publics at times also reveal affective alliances, for instance, between some of the feminist and anti-feminist activists as displayed by studies on racist as well as anti-trans mobilizations (Adlung et al., 2021; Dietze & Roth, 2020; Drüeke & Klaus, 2019; Pearce et al., 2020). These developments shed light on the fragmentation of the public sphere on social media, but also on the blurring boundaries between different movements, which further complicates the research of online activism.

How do social media scholars grasp these complex developments in times of rapidly changing digital infrastructures, APIs, and data security laws? How can researchers address and analyze the role of emotions and affect in protest mobilization when confronted with vast amounts of multimodal data? What are the challenges and opportunities of computational methods, and how can qualitative methods be applied to social media data?

In this workshop, we invite social media scholars working with various methods of automated, quantitative, qualitative, and multimodal analysis to present and discuss the different layers of

analyzing social media data. The areas of interest include applied analysis of activist practices, feminist and anti-feminist protest movements and their formations on social media, contestations within and among these movements, and finally, the role of affect, emotion, and embodiment in social media activism. Questions of technological, methodological, and ethical challenges around social media analysis will also be discussed.

Organized by research project D02 [“Contested order of emotions: \(Anti\)feminist discourses on social media”](#) at CRC 1171 *Affective Societies*.

Margreth Lünenborg, Ana Makhashvili, Annabella Backes

Keynote by Prof. Sarah J. Jackson

Revisiting #HashtagActivism: Methods, Ethics, and Moving On

In this talk I revisit the methods from my 2020 book, *#HashtagActivism: Networks of Race and Gender Justice*, to several ends. First, I discuss how and why the mixed methodological approaches my collaborators and I began using to study Twitter in 2014 worked during the primary period of our research (through 2018). I revisit our data collection methods, methods of organizing and analyzing that data, and the tools we used to present it. Then I reflect on how the enshittification of platforms, alongside an overrun of defensive publics and the delimitation of data access, presents challenges to this model. I also consider instructive challenges to methodological assumptions offered by recent work on other platforms. Along the way I discuss ethical concerns emerging from the last decade of studying digital activism, considering potential assuaging practices.

Author bio: Sarah Jackson is a Presidential Associate Professor at the Annenberg School for Communication (University of Pennsylvania). Her work engages deeply with critical theories of the public sphere, race, media, and social movements. Jackson's first book, *Black Celebrity, Racial Politics, and the Press* (Routledge, 2014), examines the relationship between Black celebrity activism, journalism, and American politics. Her co-authored second book, *Hashtag Activism: Networks of Race and Gender Justice* (MIT Press, 2020), focuses on the use of Twitter in contemporary social movements. Her latest publications include *The political uses of memory: Instagram and Black-Asian solidarities* (co-authored with R. Kuo, published in *Media, Culture & Society*) and *Recentering power: conceptualizing counterpublics and defensive publics* (co-authored with D. Kreiss, published in *Communication Theory*).

Date & Location: 4 July 18 – 20h, Hörsaal 21B, Ihnestr. 21.

No registration required.

Workshop Sessions

Date & Location: 5 July 09.30 – 16.00h, Seminar room 0.2051 at Holzlaube, Fabeckstr. 23/25.

To attend the workshop, please register by 24 June at andrea.lora.rojas@fu-berlin.de

09.30 – 09.45	<i>Welcome</i>
09.45 – 10.30	An affordance-based approach to playful activism on TikTok: The case of #niunamenos <i>Laura Cervi (Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona)</i>
10.30 – 11.15	Researching visual conflicts: Memes between protest and propaganda in the Russia-Ukraine war <i>Verena Straub (Technische Universität Dresden)</i>
11.15 – 12.00	Hashtags as signifiers of affect? Analyzing co-occurrence networks in far-right discourse on Twitter (X) <i>Ana Makhashvili (Freie Universität Berlin)</i>
12.00 – 13.00	<i>Lunch Break</i>
13.00 – 13.45	Researching affective states in far-right spaces on Telegram and Bitchute <i>Eugenia Siapera (University College Dublin)</i>
13.45 – 14.30	Beyond the binary? Automated gender classification of social media profiles <i>Miriam Siemon (Freie Universität Berlin)</i>
14.30 – 15.15	Unveiling and untangling affective registers on TikTok: A typology of #MyBodyMyChoice memetic performances <i>Annabella Backes (Freie Universität Berlin)</i>
15.15 – 16.00	<i>Open Panel: Discussing new methodological development, challenges, and limitations of current social media analysis</i>