

Europe Says OXI: “Online Camaraderie” and European Crisis

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a small-scale case study of the Facebook page, Europe Says OXI, and a group of political activists spread across European cities who are affiliated with the page. It focuses on how digital communications practices play a role in social movement participation, and follows these young people’s practices and stories as they move between different forms of mediated communication. This shows how activists use social media to apply mobilization frames that align with their shared ideological tenets, display emergent forms of leadership, and negotiate the use of media within moral frameworks. The argument complicates theories of *connective identity* and *connective action*, which some scholars discuss as a new mode of practice produced through the uptake of social media within contemporary social movements. It challenges the idea that these new modes are replacing older notions of collective identity by being personalized, leaderless, and eschewing ideology. Moving beyond seeing collective and connective in opposition, the paper attempts to build a concept around the emic term, ‘online camaraderie’, taking it as a felt sense of shared connection to the movement, its events, places, and its other participants. It suggests that understanding how a sense of camaraderie is mediation requires further theoretical and methodological reflection on how to trace the traversal of the affective relationships that the social movement relies on across various means of communication.

KEYWORDS

Europe says oxi, Facebook, connective identity, connective action, European crisis

Introduction

OXI: Greek for "NO"

NO to the Europe of the elite

NO to divide and rule

*Solidarity between the peoples of Europe as well as with its newcomers*¹

Page description of Facebook page, *Europe Says OXI*

I invited people to like the page at the time when the demonstrations were going on. Yes, there’s a relatively superficial basis to the popularity it’s generated that way – as in, the number of likes. But it focuses the discussion and builds some kind of affective relation to the events. And people who were strangers became online comrades (Edward, November 2015).

¹ Last accessed 5/4/2016

I spoke on the phone to Edward from Amsterdam while he was in Spain temporarily before moving back to Denmark. We had met in Athens earlier that year during the aftermath of the referendum on the third proposal for an economic adjustment program for Greece². Above, he mentions his initial engagement with the Facebook page, *Europe Says OXI*, a page that was started in June 2015 by a few activists in the run-up to the referendum. It sought to bolster the campaign against the memorandum (the OXI campaign) and in support of the anti-austerity movement in Greece, doing so as an English-language site that framed its support in terms of European-wide, popular solidarity with the people of Greece. As Hendrix, another activist in his 20s and the main administrator of the page, said: ‘The idea was to try to get it to go viral. And we were pretty effective in doing that. We had 60,000 followers in the first 3 weeks’. The page maintains over 76,000 Likes and is updated several times a week with new posts by the administrators.

Upon the failure of Syriza to comply with the mandate it received from the voters in the referendum, the page and its slogan did not become irrelevant but took on a meaning beyond the vote itself and towards the movement’s sustained resistance against the institutions of the IMF, the ECB, and the German national leadership. Later still, the page developed its message into a rejection of EU immigration policy and the policing of the borders of EU member states with various kinds of violence. As Edward eloquently puts it in the quote above that describes his early experience with *Europe Says OXI*, he did not only do something with the page (invited people to Like it), but the page also did something with members of the movement (focused their discussion and created ‘online camaraderie’). In this paper, I try to understand how the *Europe Says OXI* page was able to do what it did. That is, how its administrators got their audience to invest in the events it represented, and how it implicated these activists themselves in relationships of affect in the process of their involvement.

I situate this analysis within a discussion on activist identity formation, contributing to understandings of what kinds of identities social media practices produce. Some scholars argue that collective identities are becoming less important in social movements with the proliferation of digital media, signaling the rise of connected identities. However, we also see Edward’s ambivalence toward Facebook in his mention of the ‘superficial’ aspect of Likes-counting, a limitation of the platform in conveying the kind of connection he wants to mobilize in others. Hence, page-Like was not the connection that produced the meaning he gave his involvement with the movement; the digitally traceable link was not what produced his experience of ‘online camaraderie’. Instead, in what follows, I argue that collective activist identity formations persist, and are perpetuated through a complex combination of media practices that channel affect in both intended and unexpected ways, and I try to conceptualize this process through my discussion of how affective circuits are mediated in practices of political mobilization, taking the *Europe Says OXI* page as a key entry point.

² A national referendum was called by the Greek government on July 5th, 2015 to consult the population on whether to accept the bailout agreement proposed by Greece’s creditors in the Third Memorandum. The Syriza victory in the Greek Parliamentary elections was based on broad support for the party’s campaign to reject the austerity imposed on Greece because of its membership within the monetary union, without breaking with the European Union or the idea of Europe. With Alexis Tsipras as leader, the party formed a coalition government with the Independent Greeks party and went on to accept the bailout agreement despite the resounding ‘No’ vote in the referendum, and pass it through the Greek Parliament. Syriza then split over this decision, and Popular Unity emerged as a new platform with an anti-memorandum program and support for Greece exiting the Eurozone. It did not will enough votes in the September, 2015 election to take a seat in Parliament and an alternative path than the implementation of the Memorandum was not taken.

Methodology

In order to understand how *Europe Says OXI* does what it does, I conducted a small-scale investigation intended to contribute to developing methodological and ontological directions for research on the relationships between social media and identity formation. To do this, I go beyond this one Facebook page, Facebook as a web platform, and online settings in general. Treating *Europe Says OXI* as an entry point, I followed the page content, and carried out interviews and participant observation among the small group of people most closely involved with the page³. Via online observation of key page posts, participating in the page's online dissemination circuits, documenting the self-narrations of respondents' own political activism, and experiencing some of the events that they did, I was able to follow how the page was implicated within a communication circuit that cut across various media forms and online/offline settings within the particular political context around the period between the start of the OXI campaign in Greece in 2015 and the beginning of the European refugee debate in 2016.

Some of the activists I had known for years prior; others I met for the first time in the summer of 2015 in Athens, Greece, where I spent four days attending formal and informal social and political events in the city in the period directly following the capitulation of the Syriza government in talks with the Troika. I had informal conversations with several people during this time, and following this, I stayed in touch with some of them in a combination of ways: through face-to-face communication, Skype video calls, Facebook posts, and private chats. I categorized the themes that emerged within and across interview transcript texts through interpretive analysis inspired by grounded theory approaches to theme identification through iterative coding. The online and offline observations served to inform the interview questions and contextualize the interviewees' responses. This approach is ethnographic in the sense that its strength comes from the researcher being reflexive about her position as being at once both partial and immersed with relation to the social phenomena being investigated; that is, about my specifically situated perspective close to the research respondents and their lived social worlds relation to the social movement they involved in. I also incorporated the feedback on the draft manuscript from both interviewees and other activists in the network (who I include under respondents).

This approach means the research is well positioned to elucidate how (influential) users reflect on and give meaning to the dynamics behind outcomes of their media usage. It is necessary to develop methodological approaches that are attuned to these dynamics, while developing epistemologies that include the knowledge that activists, themselves, produce in the process of participating in constantly shifting spheres of political action. This knowledge (and, importantly, its technical developments and limitations) reflects how new modes of knowing about a movement are developed by those who participate in them as digital media practices become increasingly incorporated into political action. This investigation therefore also explores the value of ethnographic perspectives attuned to media-oriented practices (see Postill, 2010; Couldry, 2004) for shedding light on people's repertoires of communication and action when networked communications platforms are an important part of political mobilization, as the Facebook page is in the case of *Europe Says OXI*. This is an approach that draws on ethnographic principles coming from digital anthropology (Miller and Slater, 2000), which I have applied/argued for elsewhere (Alinejad, forthcoming).

³ All respondents' names have been changed.

The decision to focus not on migrants themselves but on actors embedded within the ‘host’ context is informed by the observation that the field of migration studies could do with focusing more on ‘non-migrants’ as research subjects. Indeed, ‘context theory’ has been proposed – on the basis of comparative work on migration in European cities – to argue that integration outcomes depend on the two-way street of adaptation on the part of *both* migrants and host countries (Schneider and Crul 2010)⁴. Nevertheless, migration studies’ research on the question of migrant incorporation maintains a methodological focus on migrants as the research subjects, examining ever more facets of their lives. The adaptation of host contexts remains a background concern, even though globalization scholarship has pointed out that notions of belonging and identity for people in host countries are shaped in relation to the migration of others, and should therefore also be the focus of investigation (Savage, Bagnall & Longhurst 2004).

Europe as mobilization frame

“I don’t think there’s ever been a *good* Europe” Daniello told me. He works for a refugee organization in Sweden working with unaccompanied minors, children seeking asylum without either parent. He was also involved with an action by border activists travelling to crossing areas between Sweden and Denmark where the group would disseminate information to those crossing about their legal rights and best routes for travel towards their desired final destinations. He admits that with the sustained pressure on European leaders, part of him ‘gloats at the breakdown of Europe’ in sense that the weaknesses in Europe’s border policies have come into sharp focus in recent public debates. He describes the current border crisis as ‘history banging on the gates of Europe’, alluding to the role of European colonial relations in producing the inequalities and conflicts causing the current influx of people seeking refuge in Europe. Like the others I interviewed, Daniello was very reluctant to identify as European, himself. He saw the notion of Europe as deployed via *Europe Says OXI*, first and foremost, as a mobilization frame. This frame appeared to operate with the two related purposes of: promoting solidarity between populations across member states, and developing criticism of European institutions from a Europe-from-below position.

Hendrix recounted a moment when Greek nationalists commented angrily on the page’s postings when the administrators started making the shift towards posting in solidarity with refugees. He referred to the content of these comments as racist and explained this was the reason why they were quickly deleted. However, he also described most of the page’s followers as organically understanding the transition toward the refugee issue. In fact, in terms of numbers of post Likes, posts related to the refugee issue ended up being the top five most popular of all the page’s posts since its inception. Of these, the post with the widest reach was a visual homage to what became the iconic photograph of Aylan Kurdi, a three-year-old Syrian boy of Kurdish background whose body was washed up in September 2015 after he drowned in the Mediterranean Sea in his family’s endeavor to flee the war in Syria. The sharp rise in attention for the page via posts on the EU border crisis was an unexpected outcome for the page administrators, but with a developing awareness about the wide interest

⁴ It is also acknowledge that, increasingly, adaptation happens in two, separate one-way processes, such that the liberal conception of integration has given way to a more authoritarian, assimilationist approach in contemporary Europe (Crul and Mollenkopf, 2012). In other words, while migrant adaptation is demanded, the host adaptation to migration is that of increased rigidity. This can be seen in the European trend of a backlash against/retreat from multiculturalism (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010).

in these posts, they responded by continuing to post about specific events relating to the issue. These posts were characterized, on the one hand, by how they humanized refugees through telling personal stories (of refugees' lives, travels, self-organization, and the volunteer solidarity they were met with on arrival), and on the other hand, by how ridicule was used to expose the inhumanity of EU and member state leaders towards refugees. 'Ridicule was one of the important tools', said Hendrix, 'to ridicule politicians when they perpetrated injustice'.

This was illustrated best in the example he offered of the particularly successful post from July 2015 that showed Merkel's anti-refugee stance (at the time)⁵. Merkel was an already-prominent symbol of European-wide austerity policy, especially with regard to its imposition on Greece at this time⁶. Already a controversial figure in that context, her direct interaction with a young girl who was a Palestinian refugee became widely publicized as a political gaffe.

'I made a meme from the stills of that encounter. It had more than a million in reach and more than 10,000 shares once the media picked it up', Hendrix told me. The intended message behind this post was that the inhumane Europe of leaders like Merkel did not represent the populations of European countries on the issue of how to include refugees. The responses to my questions about the idea of Europe that the page develops converged around the position that it was useful to mobilize a European frame to show how the anti-austerity, refugee/anti-racist, and pro-democracy struggles across national borders dovetail in their rejection of top-down, elitist, and exclusionary notions of Europe.

The page articulated these concerns via posts on specific developments that had currency in national news cycles and political debates, including content covering specific stories of solidarity efforts of Greek citizens with refugees. Speaking to the activists, it became clear that this was a choice informed by a shared ideological and strategic commitment to Leftist internationalism rather than any specific dedication to reimagining Europe from the bottom up. Using 'Europe', as Edward and others indicated, addressed the concern that traditional Left wing internationalism was not a viable political frame for reaching broad contemporary audiences. This corresponds to the tendency among the European movements of the squares of the 2000s toward using majoritarian frames for mobilizing participation in contrast to the more militant activist ones as used by the anti-/alter-globalization movement of the 1990s (Gerbaudo 2014). And as Hendrix put it, broad mobilization and activating new people, 'not just the same people you know', was one of the main goals of the page.

The notion of *connective action* (Bennett & Segerberg 2012) leaves out important elements of the process behind developing action frames like these, opposing *connective action* with

⁵ The CDU party's policy on refugees during this "crisis" has been the topic of intense debate. Merkel became known for her public stance of no upper limit on refugee numbers, received criticism for this, including from within her party. However, accusations have since arisen that Merkel's policy is no longer sustainable and that the party has adopted a de facto limit with the Turkey-EU agreement.

⁶ Merkel was seen as reducing a 14 year old Palestinian girl to tears on the set of a televised question-and-answer meeting between the German Chancellor and youth in Rostock. The video of the encounter that went viral – gaining over a million views rapidly – showed Merkel stating her position on Germany's asylum policy by telling the girl, "politics is hard sometimes" and that the country could not let thousands of refugees in "from Africa." The girl began to cry as Merkel spoke, upon which the Chancellor approached her in a gesture of comfort. Merkel's performance in the footage became the target of much ridicule in various media outlets as both her statement and the physicality of her attempt at comfort were seen by many as insensitive, stilted, and embarrassing.

the collective action that social movement organizations traditionally produced, which relied on the formation of collective identities. This idea equates communication that connects people in network formations under a common slogan or ‘personal action frame’ (such as, “we are the 99%” or, in this case, an idea of Europe for the people) with an abandonment of ideology in favor of evocative, circulating messages that derive from personal experiences. However, in this case, the emphasis on an alternative Europe and its promotion through personalized messages of humanization across borders does not signal an abandonment of internationalism. On the contrary, I would argue that in this context, internationalism is an element of a shared political ideology and previously-formed (direct or indirect – through other people) trust relationships that has made it possible/productive for this group of actors to work together, albeit outside any formal organization established on this basis. A people’s Europe as an action frame is one of the ways they translate this ideological common ground into a strategic approach towards the popular mobilization of a broad base for political participation.

As a frame, Europe seemed to have played its role effectively. However, as a scale for political participation, it does not appear as promising. Despite the notion of the page as a “European network” being enthusiastically promoted in the meetings in Athens, the activists’ reflections suggested that this was an organizational failure. Owen was an activist who had been brought on board with the page by Hendrix due to his successful formal organization of a significant solidarity effort in Ireland called Greek Solidarity Committee. He shared his reflections on this matter, noting that the idea had been to build ‘a young, tech-savvy, pan-European anti-austerity movement’ through this network set up in Athens, but the failure of the page to be a springboard for that in the summer of 2015 was largely due to the demobilization of the Greek Left (resulting from Syriza’s capitulation and the events that followed from that). This not only shows how quickly developments moved in this context, but also how the political developments drove how the networked action organized in person and online took shape. Under these circumstances, both the network and eventually the European action frame of the page were likely to become irrelevant, had it not been for the shift towards incorporating the issue of Europe’s border regime.

Hence, the reverberations of the page with its audiences during that period can be understood not only by looking at how the personalized messages that the administrators chose to disseminate resonated with people’s own personal experiences of the movement, as is suggested by notions of *connective action*. It requires understanding of people’s attunements to certain messages within fields where people’s political ideologies and shared analyses of dynamic political circumstances shape their interpretations of their experiences and the personalized messages they share and consume. This work implicates the page administrators as leaders – not because they present themselves as the established heads of formal organizations (which they do not do), but because they are instrumental in shaping the ideologically informed frames for collective action through their initiatives and innovative proposals for reinterpreting the message of the movement at a certain moment. In what follows, I discuss the emergent kinds of leadership relevant here.

From Readership to Leadership

Hendrix is the main administrator of the Europe Says OXI Facebook page. In his 20s, he recently moved from Rotterdam, the Netherlands to Athens to support the Greek anti-austerity movement during its period of growth in 2015, bringing his experience with

administering other popular Facebook pages acquired with his involvement in social movements in the Netherlands and the US, including the Black Lives Matter movement. One of the most important objectives of the page as he described it was to ‘agitate effectively’, which he basically described as consisting of articulating the problems that people are angry about (e.g. how austerity policies affect their lives) in ways that speak to them, and directing that anger towards certain political targets (e.g. elites) and away from others (e.g. refugees). It is in this way that Hendrix and others who administrate and initiate social media reference points for a movement can be seen as movement leaders. Gerbaudo elaborates on this in his discussion of how social media configure leadership roles in the context of social movements.

‘[T]he introduction of social media in social movements does not simply result in a situation of absolute spontaneity and unrestrained participation. On the contrary, influential Facebook admins and activist tweeps become “soft leaders” or choreographers, involved in setting the scene, and constructing an emotional space within which collective action can unfold’ (Gerbaudo 2012, 5).

My observations of social interactions reiterate how important this emotional space for collective action is. When those behind the *Europe Says OXI* page came together with other activists in the summer of 2015 to discuss plans for building solidarity with the movement in Greece (mostly activists from outside Greece), the distribution and defining of leadership roles and the building/maintenance of social relationships were inextricably linked. Both took shape in social settings where people took up tasks, were invited to meeting locations, made proposals, set agendas at pre-meetings, spoke up in the group or stayed silent, and generally got to know things about one another, most often via introductions through people they had already built trust relationships with. Edward happened to be friends with one of the people who were behind starting up the *Europe Says OXI* page. But he was approached online for the first time by an administrator he did not know at all, but who knew that they shared this mutual friend and asked Edward to share and invite his own friends and contacts to like the page. He did this, but also described how meeting the people face to face in Athens was a moment that galvanized the possibility for future action. And it was through collecting contact information from people physically present at these gatherings that formed the basis for group contact that would be maintained online in private forums in the months following. This would later serve as the social infrastructure through which efforts could be coordinated. Demonstrations being organized in solidarity with refugees in September, 2015 in hundreds of European cities were all listed on the common page *Europe Says Welcome*, which Edward started up, and later the same group of contacts was activated again with spreading the #safepassage and #safepassage4all hashtag bomb action on Twitter in February 2016.

The social purpose and atmosphere created in Athens in the span of a few short days as many people had face-to-face encounters with people they had been in contact with online could be understood to some extent through Coleman’s ethnographic discussion of the role of hacker conferences in building social worlds and “moral solidarity” through a combination of online and offline interactions (Coleman 2010). Sharing a physical space with people from across Europe who were part of various initiatives based in the places they came from, and hearing articulated – whether as reiteration or for the first time – a common purpose of building a movement against austerity in Europe, together implicate people in a shared, grassroots political project. And through brokering ties of trust and respect and the pushing forward of action in particular directions, leadership is taken up not only by occupying the role of page administrator (a role required by the platform), but through playing that role across

significant political moments and social settings in which the movement organizes itself both online and offline.

The way Edward describes his role identifies two different kinds of activation. With reference to the *Europe Says Welcome* page that he set up, he sees the page as playing a role in activating people to set up demonstrations in their home towns and to link up demonstrations with others in order to feel a part of something bigger. But this happens alongside forms of involving people through ‘direct personal contact’, as he puts it. ‘Ideally face to face, like dragging your friends into the demo organizing team’. The online networks of contacts crisscrossing European urban centers overlap with the same people’s sustained involvement in organizing activities with their peers, locally, in ways that respond to national-level circumstances, debates and political histories, local mobilization networks, and personal relationships.

Indeed, to some extent, the leadership shown in key activities of agenda-setting, brokerage, and administration of communication across media formats in this European network is also shaped by experiences gained through activities such as attending meetings, organizing demonstrations, and fulfilling roles within formal organizations. The following account that Owen gives of his experiences with connecting the Greek Solidarity Committee in Ireland to *Europe Says OXI* reveals not only the layered leadership roles he negotiates between, but also the deep political challenges around reconciling grassroots organization (which also made effective use of social media for mobilization) with a looser, European network. Illustrating this challenge, he recounts the page’s shift from Greek solidarity to refugee solidarity as an important moment:

Our followers in the Greek Solidarity Committee were largely newly-activated working-class people from the water charges movement, which had created its own social media space very successfully. We could link that space to Greece quite easily because of the Troika and austerity - but migration would have been contrived.

The issue of leadership within this movement suggests that an important role for leaders is ‘choreographing’ different scales of political activity. The language of formal leaderlessness and flat, networked structure is indeed shared among the activists, forming the basis for their communication and sustained personal relationships. But it is the success or failure of initiatives led on the local level – in this example, through formal structures rooted within national political contexts of Greece and Ireland – that shapes the success or failure of the European network. Others in the group also emphasized the primacy of city - and national - level successes in producing a networked solidarity movement. Seeing networks as bringing about special kinds of leadership and social relationships within movements (that are connective and personal; see Bennett & Segerberg 2012) seem draw a distinction between pre- and post-social media movements and overstate the contrast between the two. Yet, as both Edward and Owen’s accounts suggest, personal social relationships are an important element of formal organizational activity (rather the former replacing the latter). It is therefore not so useful to see networked social forms as novel accompaniments of social media usage that signal a clear break with older organizational forms. Rather, with the addition of this new, European-scale network added to the mix, it is interesting to look closely at what happens when activists add this layer of network infrastructure in this way. From what I saw, the most interesting implications had to do with how leaders played a role making decisions about the combination of message content and media form. That is, these

leaders are the ones who start pages and websites, call meetings, invite specific people to join, launch a hashtag, or start a group chat; they are also the ones who decide when to change the message behind a page and when not to. I would argue that it is in this sense that their ‘choreography’ of the movement is most evident. In what follows, I focus on how this practice of media message/format-choosing is done as part of efforts to shape people’s personal relationships to the movement.

Mediating a movement

Ramon is based in Amsterdam, having moved back to the Netherlands after having lived in Italy and spending a period in Athens up until September 2015. He had been using Facebook pages as a means to reach audiences for years before being involved with the inception of *Europe Says OXI* – the main purpose had been to gain new readers for his website (formerly a blog), which has since grown to a platform bringing together academics and activists also interested in issues concerning the European movement. One of the ways he described doing this in the site’s early days was cross-posting content from the site not only on his site’s Facebook page, but also on a range of what he called ‘movement pages’. According to Ramon, these pages had quickly built a large membership due to having been related to the large Madrid protests in 2010, and the energy generated around the Spanish movement around that time. The aim was to make his page “part of an ecology of movement pages.” His site eventually gained the attention of Spanish activists, whom he eventually met in person in Madrid while the protests there were going on.

Ramon told me how this approach had been effective early on, but an important turning point had been the change in Facebook’s algorithm. It became clear that the ‘organic reach’ (a term used by the platform to mean unpaid reach) of the site page suffered due to this change. With a significant decline in the readership of any new posts, the team that Ramon had since assembled to work on the website made plans to build autonomy from the Facebook page as a platform to gain new readers and keep existing ones coming back. This was also a decision against becoming further dependent on the platform, its algorithm, and its business model in the future. It was furthermore a decision about the kind of relationship they wanted to cultivate with the movement through media.

The *Europe Says OXI* page’s success in gaining views for certain posts in the hundreds of thousands was predicated on its administrators’ timely response to the mainstream journalistic content with personal imagery with an alternative narrative. Another limitation of the platform that Ramon signaled was precisely this dependency on the conventional news cycle – he described a ‘tyranny of immediacy’ being built into the Facebook platform with the temporality of the Facebook newsfeed, demanding a commitment to speed and spectacle. Ramon had grown uncomfortable with this over time, and had doubts about whether this was the kind of relationship they should be facilitating between readers and the movement. Jodi Dean’s work on affective networks warns of circulation of content becoming an end in itself, serving capitalist reproduction in an endless circuit that does not bring change (2010). Poell also points to the challenge these media practices pose to activists:

In turn, Lester and Hutchins (2009, 591) stress that it will remain hard for activists ‘to destabilize established patterns of political and media power’, as long as they continue ‘using the internet primarily to attract the attention of journalists’, a strategy which rather ‘reinforces and entrenches’ established

patterns. In their mind, the way forward for activists is to start using the Web for ‘sustainable self-representation’ (see also Couldry 2003 and Poell 2014)

The interesting thing is, however, that some of the activists themselves already respond to these threats through moves to, and oscillations between, other media forms. Ramon told me that his decision to shift his site’s content from a purely online format to a print magazine was part of an effort for valuable content to prevent content from being flooded out in a constant stream of information, to remain as traces without form and connections for their own sake, as Dean warns. To this end, Ramon chose print because he thought the relationship that people – including himself, personally – have to print better reflected the commitment to and from their readers that the editors hoped to cultivate and develop. He also raised associations with historical examples of print publications that had been part of celebrated movements in the 19th and 20th century. He talked about the ability of the writing forms of the printed magazine to convey the depth of analysis that he wanted readers to be able to appreciate. In this sense, developing the website into a printed magazine is ostensibly designed to mediate connections to the movement that create a more pronounced collective identity than the selective reading of loose articles via a Facebook page.

Bolter and Grusin’s thesis on remediation (2000) suggests that each new format for mediating content not only shapes the content being mediated, but also alters older media forms in relation to new ones within the changing, wider media ecology of which they are all a part. In Ramon’s case, digital publishing’s relationship to print media seems to reinforce or even reconfigure the meanings given to consuming content via print publications as being more aligned with the motives, aims, and ideals of the movement publication in question than the Facebook platform. To Ramon, print is also a way out of the option of simply shifting previously available content behind a pay wall – a business model that he sees as incongruent with his vision for the kind of relationship he wants to cultivate between his readers and the content. In this way, Ramon and his team experience the characteristics of particular media platforms, including the political economy they espouse, as being morally congruent (or not) with the messages of the movement that they are involved in mediating.

It is noteworthy that Ramon narrates this progression of change between media forms as embedded within the narrative of his engagement with the movement. This indicates that the question of how best to mediate the movement has an evolving answer, one that changes as activists develop experiences within the movement. That is, it is only the extensive experience with Facebook’s role in movement-building over time that informs an understanding of what the platform is best used for. It is also an evolving matter since Ramon mentions that not all activists he works with see Facebook in this way, and he sites his own personal relationship with books to qualify his stance. Moral interpretations about these media forms are thus negotiated among activists through the processes of self-organization. Finally, what is additionally interesting is that print publishing was the best financial option in this case. While digital publishing is often heralded as the financially attractive option for independent media initiatives due to its affordability, the costs of printing and distributing the magazine were actually closely comparable to web-based publishing, mostly because the greatest part of the costs went towards visual design. This design work would be required in either media format, as it is a key element of the publication’s consistent and recognizable visual style that sets the tone of the entire publication.

Conclusion: conceptualizing 'online camaraderie'

Based on an ethnographic pilot study carried out among a group of activists based in European migration-receiving countries, I have discussed how social media practices become part of social movement practices. As I have argued, the kinds of connections that activists make with and through social media, and the meanings they give to these connections, are not sufficiently understood through the theories of *connective identity* that some have proposed. The notion of 'online camaraderie', which I quote Edward talking about at the outset of this paper, is a term that points to a type of relationship that is at once unambiguous about its mediation via networked digital communication, but is at the same time an inflection of a historically enduring and expressly political type of social relationship. It is not encompassed in Liking or Following or Friending or the types of relationships that the platforms discussed formalize, and can therefore only be understood by accessing repertoires that involve a range of online and offline communicative practices.

I have shown in this paper that Facebook pages and Twitter hashtags become embedded within, and even constitutive of, certain forms of action that these activists embrace as practices of building a social movement and thinking about self-organization. However, the experiences of media usage they gain over time also constantly inform their emergent modes of practice. These experiences include the changes in affordances of certain platforms as algorithms change, or as the platform makes (certain) data analytics available to administrators. People appear to choose media that fit the organizational needs and moral values that are shaped by their shared ideological backgrounds, the socio-spatial aspects of mobilizing participation, and the circumstantial political options. But there is no formula for this, so media choosing includes reflection and debate and convincing one another about interpretations – it involves vision and leadership and is a thoroughly political process in itself.

This challenges the idea that social media platforms, themselves, impose some kind of standard, inherent 'logic' upon action through their networked nature, as is suggested by the idea of *connective action* (Bennett & Segerberg 2012). Instead, it includes the operation of multiple forms of leadership, strategic processes of translating ideological frames into action frames, and a range of mediated forms of sociality and (in)formal organization that I have discussed in this paper. This argument follows Fuchs' work in questioning the analytical productivity of opposing connective to collective action (in a relation where the former is replacing the latter), particularly in social movement settings where effective action is almost by definition collective (Fuchs 2014). Essentially, this way of theorizing connection does little to explain what moves people to want to connect with each other as part of a social movement, and how they experience that connection having been made (or not).

As Edward articulates, online camaraderie is something that happens when people use social media to communicate in a context of shared affective relationships to particular political events taking shape. In the instances I have discussed in this paper, the object of effectively mediating (in the moral, social, geographical, and financial sense) a sense of shared camaraderie seems to be the important drive behind the broader communicative strategies within which activists take up social media. Hence, this emic notion of online camaraderie is intended as one productive way to conceptualize how social movements make use of media and become shaped by doing so in the process. The concept encompasses the quality of a certain kind of digitally mediated affective relationship between people as part of a common movement, acknowledging the processual and contingent nature of their formation.

The scholarly attention for the specific roles of social media networks within social movements signals the need to better understand connections in this context. It also seems to reflect the need to develop theories and research methodologies that help to further grasp what digital connections mean and do. Taking one significant ‘movement page’ as an entry point, this paper has shown how I followed the page’s producers’ movements, practices, and stories to trace the links to other pages, events, physical locations, online communication spaces, people, and media objects. It reveals the need for theories and methods that go beyond mapping online connections or characterizing the novelty of contemporary movements in terms of the media technologies they use. It calls for approaches that understand more precisely how and why social movements move across media in the ways they do, and how they move people to action in the process. Online camaraderie suggests the productivity of approaches that encompass how affect circulates between events, media representations, and people in a social movement.

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