RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Macerata shooting: digital movements of opinion in the hybrid media system

Guido Anselmi
Università degli Studi di Catania

Marcello Maneri
Università degli Studi di Milano Bicocca

Fabio Quassoli
Università degli Studi di Milano Bicocca

ABSTRACT:

The role of Twitter in the organisation of political action – either by supporting existing street-level protests or native digital mobilizations – has attracted a great deal of attention. However, the wider media, political, and cultural context in which mobilizations take place is often overlooked. In this article, we analyse the trajectory of a digital movement of opinion that reacted to the shooting of black people by a right-wing militant in the Italian town of Macerata in 2018. Using a dataset of 571,996 tweets captured over 31 days, and employing a mix of machine learning, network analysis and qualitative investigation, we study how factors both external and internal to the platform sealed the fate of that movement. We maintain that the permeability of Twitter to outer divided arenas and its re-intermediation by political leaders are key to the transformation of protest movements into polarised crowds.

KEYWORDS: Digital Movement, Italy, Racism, Social media, Terrorism

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR(S): guido.anselmi@unict.it, marcello.maneri@unimib.it

1. Introduction

On 3 February 2018, far-right sympathiser Luca Traini opened fire on a group of black people in the Italian town of Macerata, wounding six of them. The violent act was motivated by the will to "avenge" Pamela Mastropietro, a 19-year-old Italian woman brutally killed, two days earlier, by her drug pusher Innocent Oseghale, a black irregular migrant. The murder and subsequent shooting were rife with political consequences: general elections were a month away, and the issue of immigration was central to the campaign, leading eventually to the unprecedented success of the far right. It was in this context that Twitter users responded to a "call to action" issued by Italian writer Roberto Saviano and, using the #Macerata hashtag, started blaming the right-wing political forces and framing the shooting as an episode of xenophobic terrorism, something unheard of in the Italian mediascape. While for a few days this position sparked a great deal of attention, the framing of the shooting soon became highly contested. After a week, the scenario had changed profoundly: on the one hand, almost half of Twitter users had adopted a frame that shifted the moral responsibility of the attack onto "out of control" immigration; on the other hand, the qualification of the attempted murder as a "terrorist attack" had almost disappeared from both Twitter and the mainstream media.

The aim of this paper is twofold. First, we use the Macerata affair to better appreciate the role of social media in the promotion of social movements, considering not only the impact that digital platforms have on organisation and communication (Bennett and Segerberg 2012), but also their power to start and shape them, briefly monopolising the public debate. We borrow here from the digital movement of opinion (DMO) framework (Barisione and Ceron 2017; Barisione et al. 2017) that has been put forward to analyse how, in the aftermath of an often tragic event or an unpopular policy, a process of networked framing (Papacharissi and Oliveira 2012) may lead a certain frame to gain a temporary hegemony. More precisely, we deal with the conditions in which a DMO may come into existence and gain momentum, distinguishing between internal and external conditions that allow for its success. Internal conditions are defined by relations among users within the social media, namely whether the positions that emerge through networked framing processes become hegemonic and the kind of network structure that connects nodes in the social media sphere. External conditions are related to legacy media and political actors, namely their agendas and their framing of the issue.

We are aware that the distinction between internal and external conditions is somewhat problematic in today's hybrid media system characterized by digitization of content and cross-media circulation (Chadwick 2017). In fact, those who participate in public debate are not particularly interested in the boundaries between legacy media and social media and re-post content from a variety of sources: internal to a single platform, shared across platforms, or, most often, from online versions of legacy media. In addition, legacy media have a direct presence on social media due to the increasing visibility and relevance of online versions of print, radio and TV, and to the number of followers that accounts traceable to legacy media have on various platforms. This is all the more true for politicians themselves who, from Obama's first election campaign onward, have realized that social media is a crucial element of their communication strategy. For these reasons, if it is hazardous to draw a sharp boundary between internal and external conditions, it is nevertheless appropriate to analyse a DMO without confining it within one or more interactive platforms but by monitoring the dynamics of the debate within the overall media ecosystem. Moreover, in the Italian case, it seems to us that a good reason to maintain the distinction between internal and external conditions on the analytical level lies in the symbiotic relationship that has historically linked legacy media and politics and that can be placed at the root of their current co-existence, within a highly mediatized public sphere, of "old" and "new" media logics.

Second, and more generally, we aim at understanding if and to what extent – from the Arab uprisings of 2011 onwards – social media have promoted a radical process of disintermediation of the public sphere (Batorski and Grzywińska 2018; Eldridge et al. 2019; Tromble 2018), transforming it into a peer-to-peer network capable of generating, at least in part independently from the mainstream media, shared representations and reasons for acting. We argue that the transformative potential of social media should be contextualised and scaled down, taking into account the specific conditions of the overall political-media arena, such as the existence of a clear and established political agenda, the presence of a dominant and widely shared frame resistant to change, or contingent decisions by crucial political actors.

Often social movements, campaigns, public rituals, and similar events are studied when they are successful, and analytical models to describe their workings are elaborated on the basis of these events. We think that studying aborted movements, in addition to considering successful ones, can be productive and revealing. The Macerata shooting is an excellent case to examine for the purpose of theorising the effects of internal and external conditions on the creation of a DMO precisely because the potential DMO in this case failed.

Our analysis relies on a dataset of 571,996 Italian-language tweets, gathered from 28 January to 28 February 2018, and on a complete collection of political statements from the main national newspapers between 4 and 17 February. As we will see, the substantial polarisation of the political arena, and the presence of narratives that had dominated media coverage of immigration-related issues for more than two decades (Maneri 2013), were decisive in the collapse of the potential DMO: the strong affective investment in the networked framing proposed by the DMO could not become sufficiently hegemonic to silence dissenting positions and was eventually flooded by the highly divided political and media discourse.

In the following section, we discuss the DMO framework and its application in the study of public responses to terror attacks. After describing our methods, we examine the extent to which a DMO emerged around #Macerata and connected hashtags, describing the external conditions in which the nascent DMO operated and their effect on the unidimensionality of framing of the event. As we will see, not only external factors but also recent developments in the social media sphere account for the failure of this DMO.

2. Analytical framework: the anatomy of a DMO

While the scholarship on the effect of social media on protest movements is divided in the assessment of their possible role – ranging from overtly positive (Meraz and Papacharissi 2013) to highly sceptical (Morozov 2011) – the strong consensus is that social media have shaped the field of study. The seminal contribution from Bennett and Segerberg (2012) outlines how social media have reshaped the operative logic of social movements. While traditional social movements based on "collective action" are fuelled by a common identification and enabled by permanent or semi-permanent organisations, social media enable protests through "connective action". Connective action, which is more diverse and (ideally) more widespread, relies on generic calls to action that may be subscribed by different individuals, regardless of their political identification.

Furthermore, connective action "weaponizes" online weak ties (Granovetter 1973), as active participation in online platforms (i.e., sharing, contributing to discussions) leads to the creation of social capital (Castells 2009; Rainie and Wellman 2012) that may be used to fuel protest action. To further develop this claim it is necessary to consider how platform affordances (Rogers 2013) drive interaction: for example, on Twitter, the massive retweeting of hashtags, beyond lowering the cost of participation and essentially helping to overcome the free-rider dilemma (Olson 1965), gives rise to ad hoc organisational forms such as networked publics (Meraz and Papacharissi 2013) or digital crowds (Stage 2013). Arvidsson et al. (2015) point out how pushing a given hashtag into the trending topic section of Twitter may be a worthwhile goal in itself and one that needs minimal organisational skills, as the logistic effort is essentially outsourced to content curation algorithms.

Most literature on online mobilisation, however, focuses either on ephemeral crowd actions (Arvidsson et al.) or, more frequently, on the impact of online organising for offline protests (Gerbaudo 2012; Tremayne 2014). The DMO analytical framework (Barisione et al. 2017) is, instead, "natively digital" since it aims at analysing opinion mobilizations that may have an offline counterpart but that predominantly take place on social media platforms. A DMO is, fundamentally, a "social movement taking place online". A DMO has four main characteristics: it is (a) politically undivided – meaning, for example, that it involves a massive mobilisation of one-sided comments and retweets under the same hashtag; (b) socially uncategorized, meaning that it mobilises members of the general public; (c) formally unorganised, or built around adhocracies and without the support of pre-existing institutions; and (d) relatively short lived.

Also, according to Barisione et al. (2017), a DMO may come into existence when an emotionally charged issue of political relevance is massively covered on both traditional and digital media. The authors show this

by charting the evolution of tweets under the #refugeeswelcome hashtag. An unanticipated and shocking event gains prominence – in this case with the diffusion of pictures of the lifeless body of refugee toddler Alan Kurdi. This happenstance then orients the public sentiment in a coherent direction as content curation algorithms aggregate similar stances and massively reduce the cost of engagement while simultaneously silencing opposed reactions (Noelle-Neumann 1974). When the DMO has run its full course, leading to relevant political consequences, public opinion will eventually return to a polarised state.

Building on the previously identified features of a DMO, we can rethink the factors that characterise and affect the successful creation of a DMO, distinguishing between internal and external conditions. Internal conditions include all factors related to online relations among users, such as the number of posts, the unidimensionality of sentiment, and the structure of the digital network. External conditions include non-digital factors such as the emotional value of the issue; its coverage and framing by traditional news sources and political actors, together with their agenda; and the possible appearance of "counter-events" that have the potential to reverse the direction of the emotional flow. In the promising DMO analytical framework, external conditions appear undertheorized, making impossible to understand how external and internal conditions influence each other and combine to create a DMO or prevent it from fully unfolding.

The literature on terrorism and social media provides some hints on which external conditions lead to, or hinder, DMOs. For instance, Al Nashmi (2018), focusing on the Instagram fallout of the Charlie Hebdo jihadi attacks, describes an almost perfect DMO: as a response to the killings, users acted en masse (and without central coordination) to frame the event in a unidirectional way, under the hashtag #jesuischarlie, reaffirming what they perceived as common values and triggering a wave of international solidarity. Payne (2018) and Giaxoglou (2018), analysing what happened on Twitter in this situation, came to the same conclusion, the latter adding that such unanimity gave rise to universal moral stances, both within and outside social media.

Eriksson (2015) registered how, in the immediate aftermath of the Utoya shootout of 2011, messages showing commitment to national values of tolerance or sympathy for the victims accounted for 70 percent of tweets. However, the sentiment was not fully unidirectional, due to the diffusion of fake news blaming jihadi terrorism and to the presence of far-right conspiracy theorists classifying Oslo as a "false flag". In the Charlie Hebdo case, but from another angle, contributions by An et al. (2016) and Giglietto and Lee (2015) showed the limits of unidirectional sentiment by surveying the flight of Muslims to other hashtags such as #jesuisachmed and #jenesuispascharlie, motivated by the perceived Islamophobic content of the mainstream framing.

While we do not have enough empirical evidence to build a full taxonomy of events and their political context, we can observe that in both cases the labelling of the attack as terrorist was unanimous and the social media reaction was in tune with the political context, as narratives coming from DMOs were strongly aligned with narratives and deep-seated values shared by mainstream media and political actors.

In the case of the shooting in Macerata, it could be assumed that the publicly-affirmed and constitutionally-sanctioned values of anti-racism and anti-fascism would provide the hegemonic cultural framework able to sustain a digital movement that confronted this traumatic rupture. After all, Traini had staged a carefully-prepared symbolic –albeit bloody– performance. Arrested wrapped in the Italian flag, displaying a Roman salute and shouting "Italy for Italians" in front of a war memorial in the centre of Macerata, he presented himself as the typical racial warrior epitome of white supremacist discourse (Daniels 1997). He pretended to be not only the avenger of the white female victim of rapacious black rapists and murderers but, with his indiscriminate shooting, a patriot waging a just war against hordes of colour. His theatrical conflation of nation and whiteness, under the protective arm of fascist masculinity and violence, should have rung a bell.

As we are set to show, the ears of mainstream media and political actors were rather deaf to that ring, making it lack, if not hinder, the support that would have given the initial wave of digital outrage a wider reach. Despite widespread references to a "post-racial" society in public discourse, the racialized historical construction of Europeanness (Goldberg 2006; Lentin 2020) keeps working in the underground. Traini's performance clearly resonated with a common-sense culture of whiteness (Rattansi 2005), in which the individual/Traini appealed to a collective, if unspoken, identity, one that could condemn his "mistake" while sharing the same gaze, so that the racist and terrorist nature of his action remained buried under a blanket of distinctions.

As intuitively clear as it may be, the definition of an act as "terrorism" is a highly controversial issue (Zolo 2005). In his thorough historical reconstruction, Benigno (2018) points out that after being introduced to identify a specific phase of the French Revolution and a political practice based on Robespierre and the Jacobins' blood and fear, the word "terrorism" has travelled throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the early 1980s, it took a meaning that connects it to the exercise of indiscriminate violence against the civilian population by individuals and organisations sponsored by one or more foreign powers against the West. The label was thus applied either to the left-wing political organizations who aimed at promoting a communist revolution in Western countries or to the integralist/radical/jihadist groups within the Islamic world. Consistently, actions involving the use of violence by Western countries were, from then on, excluded by definition from the field of the exercise of terror. Crucial, in this regard, was the publication of the book Terrorism by Benjamin Netanyahu (1986) which, as Said (1986) immediately noted, was a turning point in the debate involving a wider audience: media operatives, think tank experts active in security consulting, and lobbyists seeking to influence security policies (Guareschi and Rahola 2019).

We cannot address here the complex and tortuous scholarly debate still underway on the various definitions of terrorism (Cooper 2001). We just recall, quoting again Benigno (1985), that the difficulty in finding a widely shared analytical definition: "arises essentially from the fact that "terrorism" is not a neutral term, purely descriptive, but it is instead an evaluative locution, of political-normative type, a derogatory label adopted by governments and political forces to discredit adverse groups denouncing their behaviours as illegitimate". As a consequence, figures who had been defined as terrorists in a certain phase, after a change in the political conditions have even been awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace (Yasser Arafat, Menachem Begin, Nelson Mandela) and the mujahidin and Afghan Taliban, praised in the 1980s by the American administration as freedom fighters against the Soviet invaders, were then declared terrorists and fought as such.

Defining an event as terrorist has a stark performative effect (Weinman 1987; Nosseck 2008; De Graaf and De Graaff 2010). The recognition of an attack as "terrorist" frames it as a threat to society's order, which leads to a Durkhemian ([1893] 2014) reaction increasing in-group solidarity (Hawdon et al. 2010). This definition is, in political terms, a strategic move: it evokes a radical break within a symbolic order, appealing to a political community by means of what unites it most deeply and, at the same time, positioning the executioner – the act of violence, the "evil" – outside the community, which recognizes and reconstitutes itself in the enactment of a purification ritual. For these reasons, it is important to examine the process through which political actions involving the indiscriminate exercise of violence against civilians are classified as terrorism or, on the contrary, are downgraded to "mere" crime cases.

3. Data sources and methodology

When dealing with a DMO, contextual awareness is paramount: quantitative measures provide vital information regarding the size, spread and fragmentation of activity over social networking platforms, but their interpretation requires an assessment of the political context in which they are situated. Hence, building upon digital methods literature (Rogers 2013), we employ a mixed methods perspective.

Rather than assuming full generalizability of our results, at the expense of a deeper understanding of the case (as it would be customary for a computational social science article) we employ our computational methods in a "heterodox" fashion, as Tornberg and Uitermark (2021) advise, meaning that we are not seeking to supplant interpretation but to produce some evidence to support interpretation (see also Nelson 2020 and Caliandro et al. 2020).

Our main objective is expanding the above-mentioned theorization by assessing the role that internal and external factors, and their interplay, can play in shaping a DMO. Internal factors will be estimated by looking at digital data, namely a) volume of tweets, that is the number of tweets released for each day; and b) one-directionality, meaning that a relevant number of users frame the event in a similar way. We operationalized this latter concept in two steps. Firstly, we have assessed how individual users have framed the event using a combination of ethnography and machine learning, where we downloaded and hand-tagged a sample of 6799

tweets that we "fed" to a text classifier. We then used our trained classifier to classify the remaining tweets. Secondly, we have organised the tweets into a Retweet Network, with nodes being twitter users. Subsequently, we employed a community detection algorithm and force based visualisation to assess how many tweets share a common content.

External factors will be accounted for with a qualitative content analysis of the news-stories published during the crisis. We examined both print and digital editions of the main Italian newspapers with nationwide circulation (Avvenire, Corriere della Sera, Il Fatto Quotidiano, Il Giornale, il manifesto, La Stampa, Libero, Quotidiano Nazionale, Repubblica). The nine newspapers were chosen on the basis of their diffusion and their ideological/political orientation. More precisely, from 4 February (the day after the shooting) to 17 February, 2018, we selected and analysed all articles (143) with headlines reporting statements about the Macerata shooting made by national-level members of various political parties as well as representatives of government institutions[1]. In this way, we could study the definitions and the framing of events, the political agenda, and the kind of emotional work carried out by the dominant voices in the debate. Even though some leaders used Twitter to enter the legacy media sphere, the prominence conveyed by newspapers to their opinions is an important factor in shaping the context in which the conversation on Twitter developed and its likely effects.

The aim of our analysis is, first, to assess the extent to which the definition of the Macerata shooting as terrorism led to an undivided and successfully mobilised DMO; and, second, to describe how external and internal conditions influenced this outcome. Despite known issues with representativeness of data capture through the API (Driscoll and Walker 2014; Gonzalez-Bailon et al. 2012), we decided to gather Twitter data because hashtags are a mobilising device used by social movements, influencers, and politicians. Twitter is an "elite" platform that does not represent the wider society (the way opinion polls pretend to do) while, at the same time, it is rather representative of its most politically active part. By virtue of its integration with other media, Twitter has become a focal point of the media system, as elite political entrepreneurs use it to promote their views while gaining visibility on newspapers and tv shows.
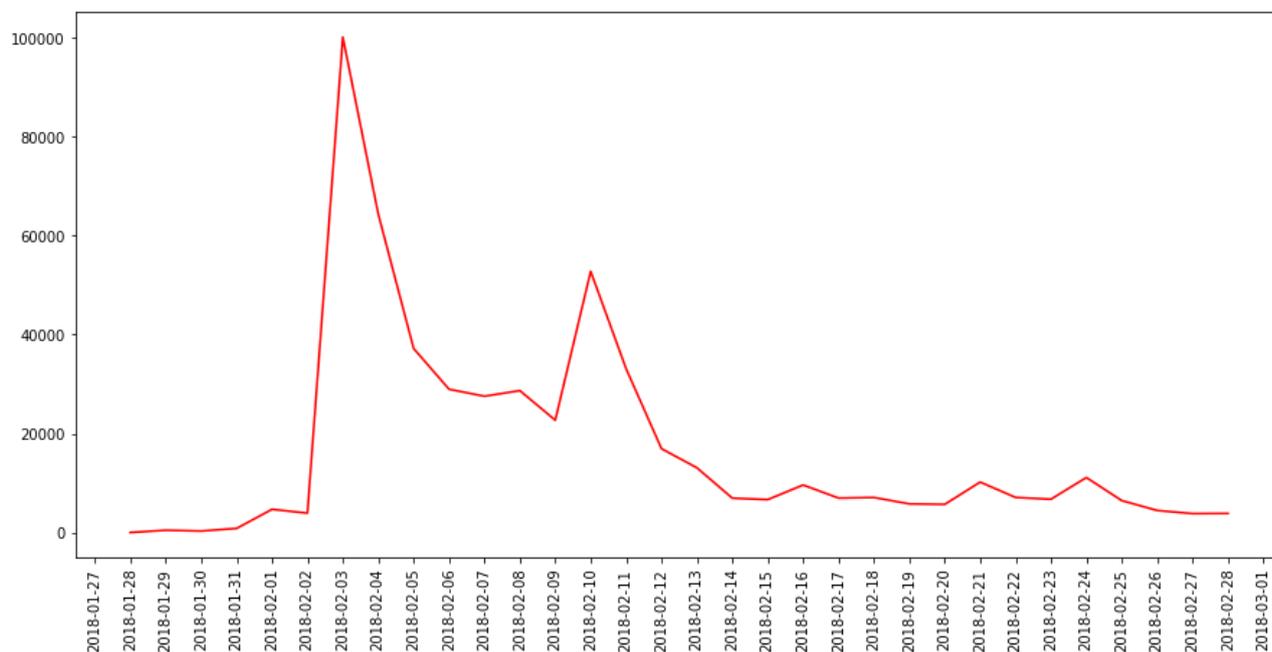
We captured tweets through a Python application interfacing with the search API, using the following keywords: #Macerata, #pamelamastropietro, #pamela, #lucatraini, #oseghale, #maceratamanifestazione, #terrorismo. In contrast to the approach used by Barisione et al. (2017), we decided to capture multiple hashtags for two reasons. First, the choice of a single hashtag, one that included an explicit attitude, was admittedly an important limitation in that study (Barisione et al.: 16). To examine the performance of the public sphere, we need to include multiple views in the picture. Second, the rapidly evolving nature of the events, where new hashtags were being created (such as #maceratamanifestazione), led us to use multiple keywords.

The data capture spanned from 28 January to 28 February, 2018, in order to examine eventual developments in the conversation. Keywords were revised on 10 February to include those referring to the demonstrations triggered by the shooting (#maceratamanifestazione). The tweets gathered were de-duplicated in the data cleaning phase, resulting in a database of 571,996 tweets over 31 days. While we stored the full range of Twitter metadata, we mainly used the message, date, author's name and retweet status fields. As Figure 1 shows, peak activity occurred on 3 February and 10 February, the days when the digital mobilization began and when the Macerata demonstration was held. In these crucial days engagement was at its highest, suggesting the need to look more closely at this period.

Starting with a (digital) ethnographic approach (Caliandro and Gandini 2016), we examined the 100 most retweeted messages published between 3 and 11 February, pinpointing the main frames that characterised the conversation. As most messages diverged mainly around the various factors that brought to Traini's attack and

Figure 1 - Tweets per day.

---

[1] We extended our data collection span to 17 February 2018, when the last two articles with reference to statements made by politicians were published by *Libero* and *Repubblica*. Six days after the demonstrations that took place after the shooting in Macerata, the news had essentially disappeared from the national press. The 143 articles selected were distributed among the nine newspapers as follows: *Avvenire* 8, *Corriere della Sera* 25, *Il Fatto Quotidiano* 6, *Il Giornale* 14, *il manifesto* 5, *La Stampa* 5, *Libero* 19, *Quotidiano Nazionale* 12, *Repubblica* 49.

Source: *Authors' elaboration*

in how they constructed victimisation, we decided to distinguish between seven frames according to the preferred explanation(s) attributed to the tragic event and whom was granted a victim status. A first family of frames highlights, with decreasing frequency, racism, fascism, and terrorism as causes and qualifiers of Traini's action and/or ask for respect of his victims. A second family, again with decreasing frequency, combines an anti-antiracism focused on the demonstration and the Left's alleged hypocrisy, violence, and anti-Italianness; an Italian victims first stance, which accuses anti-racists for not protesting for Pamela's killing as they were doing for Traini's spree; and an immigration bomb frame, where uncontrolled migration flows are seen as the main drivers of the attack[2]. Henceforth, we will call these opposing families, or macro frames (for brevity, "frame" in the text) Antiracism and Nativism[3]. Tweets in the Antiracism frame blamed the far right for the shooting, while tweets in the Nativism frame shifted the blame on antiracists and migrants whose misbehaviour and mere numbers would have led to the shooting.

The first frame (Antiracism) contains a j'accuse by the well-known writer Saviano and others (see below): tweets in this frame construct the event as the ultimate consequence of the politics of fear played by the Italian xenophobic right. In these tweets, the shooting is perceived as a consequence of the dehumanisation of migrants (especially black and brown migrants) and is attributed to excessive tolerance enjoyed by far right and neo-fascist political groups[4].

> Fascists spread hatred and terror, often kill. We knew this well before #Macerata. A killer
> kills, performs a roman salute and wraps himself in the Italian flag: only those that previously

---

[2] For exact percentages see Maneri et al. (2022).

[3] In previous publications (Anselmi et al. 2020a, 2020b; Maneri et al. 2022) we used different labels but the meaning of the macro frames is the same.

[4] We report the most representative tweets across the two frames, selected among the most retweeted. Original tweets are in Italian.

had nurtured them in the name of "democratic debate" are now surprised [@Wuming_Foundt, 2-3-2018 RT 1732][5]

The second frame (Nativism) holds an opposing stance, as the incident is reconstructed as a kind of extreme reaction to the killing of Pamela Mastropietro. Furthermore, the shooting is somewhat justified by the exasperation triggered by migrants' criminal activity, facilitated by Centre-Left governments' "open-door" policies of immigration. In essence, the Italian (and global) left is perceived as ultimately responsible for the crisis. While the majority of posts in this frame still condemn Traini's actions, a minority of tweets openly glorify Traini as a self-styled avenger of white and native Italians.

Boldrini Saviano and Grasso[6] accuse Salvini to be the instigator of what happened in Macerata. Does this thinking also work backwards? Are they the instigators of all the crimes of immigrants, because they encouraged mass immigration? [@DiegoFusaro 2-3-2018 RT 436]

After identifying in the above-mentioned way the two main frames in the conversation, we tagged a sample of tweets drawn out of the whole dataset composed of highly retweeted tweets (in the 90th percentile of retweets) as well as a random sample of tweets, in order to mitigate overfitting. The full training sample consisted of 6,779 tweets (including 1,074 highly retweeted posts) and has been tagged by two analysts (Chronbach's alpha is .83)[7]. The training sample was then fed into a proprietary Algorithm for text classification: IBM Watson Natural Language Classifier. A random sample of 1,000 tweets was then double checked by a second human analyst, who found that the posts were accurately classified in 75 percent of cases. Descriptive statistics of the two frames are reported on Table 1.

Table 1 - Descriptive statistics of the two frames.

	Nativism	*Antiracism*
Number of Tweets	127150	178357
Max Retweets	2932	1046
Average n of retweets	43 (std dev. 247)	41 (std dev. 271)
Gini index of retweets	.90	.89

Source: Authors' elaboration

A quick look at the distribution of retweets shows that the two frames have a comparable number of tweets (even if the Antiracist frame is larger) have a similar average number of retweets, and have a very high concentration index, which is consistent with what we would expect from a heated debate over Twitter, in which a large number of users retweet a small number of highly performing accounts.

4. External conditions: the politics of downplaying

---

[5] Retweet numbers (RT) refer to the day of capture (i.e the day after the day the tweet was authored). They may have varied since then, because more users may have retweeted that content in later days, or because some users have been banned and their retweet was deleted

[6] Italian left-wing writers and politicians.

[7] In our analysis of frames we treated as residuals tweets that did not pass a clearcut judgement on the shooting, for example only providing factual information. While these are a relatively large percentage of the posts (46 per cent), they are hardly relevant for our study as they did not convey any particular frame.

In 2018, a nationwide poll conducted by Ipsos[8] showed that half of the Italian population had felt, at times, foreign in their own country, 59 percent believed that national identity was disappearing, and a large majority maintained that globalisation was bad for Italy (only 18 per cent thought it had a positive impact on the national economy). As far as immigration and asylum were concerned, 72 percent of Italians upheld the principle of political asylum and the right of asylum seekers to find international protection and 61 percent said they were concerned about the growing climate of racism and discrimination; however, 57 percent considered immigration a source of concern and gave it a fundamentally negative judgment, and 44 percent said they were sceptical about migrants' efforts to integrate in the Italian society. Furthermore, if unemployment was the most important source of concern, immigration and crime were firmly in second place, and Ipsos concluded its report by saying: "Negative sentiment towards immigration is exacerbated by security fears and the perception that Italy has lost control of its borders, as well as the inability of the authorities to effectively manage the migration phenomenon".

If this was the general political climate, Pamela Mastropietro's killing, and the subsequent shooting in Macerata came at a delicate political moment, as national elections were to be held on 4 March. Furthermore, at the time of the shooting, poll projections were showing huge gains for the far right, especially for the xenophobic Lega party, for which Traini had been an activist. Migration, particularly the reception of asylum seekers, was the hot topic of the electoral campaign as Lega decried the alleged failure of what they called "open borders" immigration policy of the previous government, led by the centre-left Partito Democratico (PD).

On the day in which Mastropietro's killing was revealed, the leader (and premier candidate) of Lega, Matteo Salvini, openly placed the blame on the left-wing government, stating on Facebook that "[their] open border policy is now drenched in blood"[9]. This was followed, on 3 February, by a tweet shifting the blame for the shooting onto black migrants:

> Violence is never a solution, violence is always to blame, and who violates the law must pay. Out of control migration breeds chaos, anger and social resentment. Out of control migration breeds drug trading, thefts, robberies and violence #Macerata [@matteosalvinimi 2-3-2018 RT 646]

As the town of Macerata had been a stronghold for PD since 2000, the issue was very sensitive in the context of the upcoming elections. Nevertheless, the reaction was mild: on 3 February, former premier Matteo Renzi invited all Italians to "tone down" the outrage in a Facebook post, and in a subsequent tweet on 5 February he indirectly confirmed the assumption that immigration brings insecurity[10]. Tweets from the premier, Gentiloni, were even milder, containing just generic appeals to "stop the violence" without any attempt to blame a political competitor or even any mention of the gunman's racist motives. It was in this context that a number of Twitter users started to frame the shooting as something other than a common crime or a reaction to insecurity brought by migrants, defining it instead as a right-wing terror attack fuelled by the rising tide of xenophobia. Roberto Saviano, an internationally famous Italian writer, entered the fray on 3 February with these tweets:

> I challenge the mainstream media to represent what has happened in Macerata according to its real nature: a fascist-led terror attack. Every attempt to sugarcoat or neutralise this piece of news is conniving [@robertosaviano 2-3-2018 RT 2604]

---

[8] See, https://www.ipsos.com/it-it/unitalia-frammentata-atteggiamenti-verso-identita-nazionale-immigrazione-e-rifugiati-italia

[9] See, https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2018/02/01/pamela-mastropietro-boldrini-gesto-infame-criminale-paghi-salvini-la-sinistra-ha-le-mani-sporche-di-sangue/4130877.

[10] "What went on in macerata was an act of racism but lone gunmen cannot bring justice. The answer is hiring 10000 policemen a year: common sense is the answer, not cutting police funding." *[@matteorenzi 2-5-2018 RT 376]*

The tweets quickly gathered momentum, aggregating 8,908 retweets in the next few days. Meanwhile, other left-wing influencers, such as the Wu Ming writers' collective, posted content framing the shooting as an act of terror, driving the hashtag #Macerata onto the list of nationally trending topics. Note that this framing was entirely novel, as even more gruesome xenophobic aggressions[11] had never been framed as terrorism in the news. While Saviano's statement became national news in itself, the designation of the shooting as a terror act didn't: with only one minor exception (the left-wing Il Manifesto), no national newspaper defined the shooting in this way (Colombo and Quassoli 2020). Moreover, the framing of the shooting in the following days built on consolidated tropes and strongly associated the shooting with an (alleged) "insecurity wave" brought by migrants. This practice was so widespread that, on 7 February, Angelo Cardani, the head of the Italian media self-regulatory body, released an informal declaration urging a stop to it.

Meanwhile, the mobilisation spearheaded by left-wing influencers quickly extended beyond Twitter and resulted in calls to hold an antifascist demonstration in Macerata on 10 February. However, this call to action was openly opposed by the PD-led centre-left government, which was trying to keep a low profile on the issue: no member of the government visited the victims of the shooting; party officials exerted pressure on organisers to cancel the demonstration while the Ministry of Interior pressured local police authorities to ban it, eventually failing to do so. On 8 February, PD leader Matteo Renzi declared in the national newspaper Repubblica that he did not deem it correct to define the event as terrorism, and he accused the previous (Berlusconi-led, right-wing) government of unsavoury management of migration flows, essentially blaming it for the (allegedly) high number of migrants and refugees, confirming in this way the causal link between immigration, the killing of Pamela Mastropietro, and the shooting by Luca Traini. In a sense, one could say that not only did Renzi (and other prominent politicians) give credit to the "blaming-the-victim" interpretative framework, but he also implicitly took for granted the colour-coded logic that led Traini to shoot black people, and not pushers, men, or irregular migrants.

The demonstration was eventually held on 10 February as planned, incidentally on the same day as the Giornata del ricordo, a national Remembrance Day for Italians killed by Yugoslav communist forces during World War II. At this point the focus of the news media had shifted from the shooting to the protest, but the coverage was far from sympathetic, emphasising security risks and downplaying the political considerations at the root of the rally. While the protest in Macerata featured no incidents, the newspapers still played the security refrain, choosing to report clashes in similar demonstrations held in other cities.

Moreover, a counter-event significantly affected the ongoing frame dispute, disrupting the momentum of the nascent movement. An online local news website[12] reported that a group of activists "would have" publicly mocked the Giornata del ricordo in a chant that was not picked up by other protesters. The supposed event was immediately retweeted by right-wing Twitter users with the #macerata hashtag, generating fake news in the process, and the major national newspapers reported the story, this time without the conditional form. At this point, TV news delved into the issue, and almost every politician from either side released a statement condemning the chant, with the consequence that the framing of the demonstration drastically changed.

This reconstruction shows how the DMO on the Macerata shooting was unwelcomed, to say the least, by the legacy media and the political environment, highlighting how external conditions can both substantially constrain the spread of a given frame and provide additional frames that compete with the networked framing operated by the DMO. Media reconstructions and political statements can also affect the beginning phase of a DMO by redefining the emotional character of the trigger event, in this case downplaying its salience, muting its racist connotation and undermining the community reaction, thereby discouraging widely shared public rituals.

---

[11] For example, in 2011, in Firenze, a neo-fascist shot and killed two Senegalese migrants; in the same year, an anti-Roma pogrom happened in Ponticelli (Napoli), and in 2018 a Senegalese citizen was killed by a lone gunman in Firenze. None of these events was labelled as terrorism.

[12] https://www.lindiscreto.it/macerata/40007-manifestazione-antifascista,-folla-e-cori-ai-giardini-diaz.
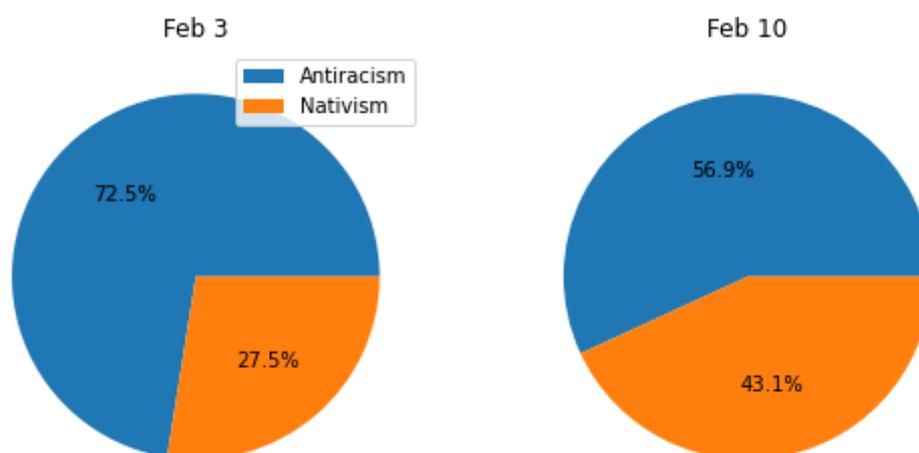
5. Internal conditions: Compact vs. fragmented communities

We now describe internal conditions and how they shaped this potential DMO. To analyse how users interacted with each other on the two peak days, 3 and 10 February, we consider five different indicators: the general volume of tweets, the relative size and the content of the two frames, the retweet network cohesiveness, the concentration of retweets, and the permeability to legacy media retweets.

Regarding the volume of communication exchanges, the most active day in our dataset (100,091 tweets) was 3 February, when the massive retweeting of Saviano and other influencers claiming that the shooting was a case of terrorism was still in full swing. Comparatively, on 10 February, online activity was less intense, with roughly half as many tweets (52,771).

During this crucial week, we observe a striking change in the relative weight of the two frames (Figure 2).

Figure 2 - Frame distribution on 3 and 10 February

Source: *Authors' elaboration*

On 3 February, Antiracism framing was prevalent, with 72 percent of the valid content (ignoring tweets classified as residuals, see Note 6). By 10 February, the Antiracism frame, though still slightly dominant, had lost some of its prominence, accounting for slightly less than 57 percent of valid tweets. Conversely, the Nativism frame had grown considerably, reaching 43 percent of valid tweets.

However, an even more relevant change concerns the focus on terrorism. On 3 February, almost 30 percent of tweets within the Antiracism frame explicitly mentioned words connected to this concept, many of them being retweets of Saviano and other high-profile left-wing influencers (Table 2).

Besides, a great number of tweets blamed xenophobes without mentioning terrorism.

> if you talk about migrants and you say "a mass cleansing is needed, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, taking the hard way" sooner or later some crazy violent or fascist will do it, just as it has happened today in #macerata #lucatraini. Who has blood in his hands, Salvini? [@danielecina 3-2-2018 RT 539]

On the opposite side, the bulk of tweets within the Nativism frame blamed the government and the centre-left coalition for flooding Italy with migrants, adding in some cases that the latter had boosted both street-level and organised crime.

> Minniti [the Ministry of Interior] will go to Macerata and will have a press conference on what has happened today. The same people did nothing similar for the Mastropietro murder. Institutions want a race war and have mobilised against Italian people [@cesaresacchetti 3-2-2018 RT 466]

Table 2 -Tweets containing the lemma "terrorism" and synonyms.

Date	Antiracism	Nativism
3-2-2018	29.8%	0.7%
10-2-2018	6.5%	0.1%

Source: Authors' elaboration

On 10 February, "terrorism" had disappeared from the tweets (less than 7 percent of tweets in the Antiracism frame contained words connected to terrorism), as the focus shifted from the shooting to the antiracism demonstration to be held that day. This shift took place also within the Nativism frame. Comments about the news on chants mocking the Giornata del ricordo dominated the frame, along with the diffusion of tweets regarding the results of the postmortem examination of Mastropietro's body.

> We now know that five Nigerians are suspected of murdering #Pamela. The post-mortem describes how she was hacked into pieces with great care and how her heart is still missing. But today in #Macerata they are holding an antiracist demo, not a demo against Nigerian pushers, you are a joke! [@giorgiameloni 10-2-2018 RT 1046]

> #Macerata, #antifascist #antiracist pro-migration and pacifist demo: several activists chanting how good #FOIBE were. Turin antifascist demo with bombs thrown at the police, shame on you, scum [@matteosalvinimi 10-2-2018 RT 465]
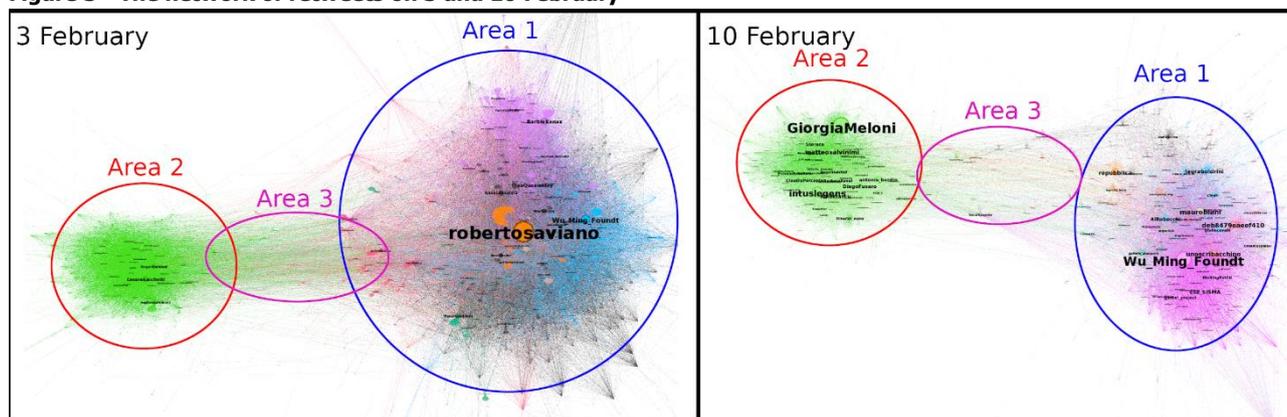
To better understand this change in volumes, framing and focus, we can consider the structure of the retweet network. The first feature we can observe is the vertical nature of retweet relationships. On both days, the share of retweets was high: on 3 February, 89 percent of posts in the Antiracism frame and 86 percent of posts in the Nativism frame consisted of retweets, and on 10 February, the two percentages were even higher (91 percent for Antiracism and 88 percent for Nativism). Furthermore, in both frames, retweets were highly concentrated: the Gini index for retweets was .87 for Antiracism and .85 for Nativism on 3 February; and .77 for Antiracism and .82 for Nativism on 10 February. These figures mean that on both days a large number of non-influential users retweeted a very small number of highly influential hubs and hence that participation on Twitter was elite driven.

In order to assess fragmentation, we constructed and analysed a retweet network for the day of the shooting (3 February) and the day of the demonstration (10 February). Then we associated the prevalent frame[13] to individual nodes (users) as a node-level attribute and ran a community detection algorithm (Blondel et al., 2008) to assess the fragmentation of the retweet network in different communities. Figure 3 shows the polarised

---

[13] For each node, we computed the number of posts in each frame: the "prevalent frame" is the frame with more posts.

retweet structure on these two days[14]: the network has an hourglass shape (cfr. Venturini et al. 2021) with two "super clusters" containing nodes that, as we shall see, are mainly aligned with one of the two frames. In order to give a more faithful representation of the retweet network, we have also used tweets that had been flagged as "residuals" by our classifier.

Figure 3 - The network of retweets on 3 and 10 February

Source: *Authors' elaboration*

Table 3 -Prevalent frame for each retweet community.

3 February			10 February		
Community	*% Antiracist*	*% Nativist*	*Community*	*% Antiracist*	*% Nativist*
C6	98,79	1,21	C15	98,36	1,64
C8	97,77	2,23	C20	84,21	15,79
C17	3,08	96,92	C27	82,92	17,08
C19	99,58	0,42	C58	99,30	0,70
C21	95,62	4,38	C59	1,62	98,38

Source: Authors' elaboration

Table 3 contains the aggregated prevalent frame for the top 5 retweet communities[15]. Considering Table 3 and Figure 2 together, we can analyse the distribution of frames. In the RT network we can distinguish three

---

[14] The node size is proportional to the number of retweets. Colour identifies different subcommunities. Force Atlas visualisation has been applied, meaning that nodes that tend to retweet each other cluster together.

[15] We have considered just the top 5 communities for each day since this selection minimises data loss as the top 5 communities gather 81% of authors for 10 February and 77% for 3 February.

main areas: Area 1 contains different communities: four out of the top five, which, in almost all the cases, contain accounts which post predominantly in an Antiracist frame. Area 2 contains, in both the two peak days, a single community (C17 on 3 February and C59 on 10 February), which use mostly the Nativist frame. Area 3 constitutes a bridge: essentially, it is an area which is poor in nodes but rich in edges linking Area 1 to Area 2, and mainly composed of factual messages in residual tweets.

Furthermore, if we analyse how the frames are distributed within the whole RT network we can appreciate how the levels of fragmentation of the Antiracism and the Nativism frames differ, as the latter seems more closely knit while the former appears fragmented into subcommunities. In fact, on 3 February, the Antiracism frame was spread in 59 different communities but the Nativist frame only in 22. In addition, authors were much more concentrated in the Nativism frame than in the Antiracism one: the largest community in the Nativism frame gathers 89 percent of users; by comparison, the largest community in the Antiracism frame gathers just 22 percent of all users. As of 10 February, the Nativism frame is still more closely knit: it is divided into 32 subcommunities with the top one gathering 88 percent of all authors, whereas the Antiracism frame is split into 46 subcommunities, with the largest one gathering only 34 percent of total nodes.

The Antiracism frame shows also more connections with mainstream media: on 3 February, 66 percent of retweets of mainstream media come from accounts within the Antiracism frame, compared with 33 percent from the Nativism frame. On 10 February, we saw similar percentages: 68 percent from the Antiracism frame and 32 percent from the Nativism frame.

These data suggest some considerations. First, from the beginning, the networked public within the Antiracism frame was far from expressing unidirectional sentiment. The fact that we used multiple hashtags in our approach (building a sample of tweets gathered around multiple general and nonevaluative hashtags, like #macerata, thus including dissenting or plainly neutral views) allowed for the emergence of diversity, an aspect overlooked in the study by Barisione et al. (2017), which was based on a single hashtag (#refugeeswelcome). Nonetheless, the presence of a multivocal public debate does not invalidate the DMO idea, as social movements – DMOs not being an exception – are often made of multiple active minorities (Mugny 1982).

Second, indicators of cohesiveness and concentration allow us to shed light on the role of fragmentation in the Antiracism frame in hampering the nascent DMO. As we have seen, both frames were elite driven, but the Antiracism one was much more fragmented. Its main divide was between the mainstream and the "alternative" left – both of them referring to one, or more than one, influencer (the most prominent being Saviano for the former and Wu Ming for the latter). This is evident from the fact that both areas cater to different retweet communities in the RT graph, for example cluster 6 and 19 on 3 February. This split became more pronounced on 10 February, as the demonstration in Macerata was actively opposed by PD and supported by the alternative left. Accounts in area 1 – more likely to be in connection with traditional media – "imported" and autonomously elaborated on divisive issues such as the opportunity to organize the 10 February demonstration and the containment of protesters during the rallies (painstakingly reported by media), in addition to the definition of the shooting as an act of terror.

In sum, even though the Antiracism frame was initially dominant and gained momentum despite being promoted by a mobilised minority, it eventually encountered major setbacks, namely external conditions that made it difficult to gather wider recognition. This lack of external support exacerbated already existing fractures within the Antiracism frame, leading to an affirmation of the more compact Nativism frame.

5. Conclusions: Postmortem of a failed DMO

MMore than two years after the events described in this paper, the English, Spanish and German versions of Wikipedia – the most accessed repository of collective memory[16] – define the Macerata attack in their

---

[16] https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-global-digital-overview.

opening lines as a fascist/racist action, qualifying it as "terrorist"[17]. Even in the more nuanced Italian version, we can find references both to Luca Traini's political and ideological belonging (extreme right and Lega) and to the three judgements issued so far – first-degree, appeal and Cassazione (Supreme Court) – in which he was sentenced to 12 years in prison for attempted massacre with the aggravating circumstance of racist purpose[18]. Furthermore, three of the four linguistic versions report that Traini's name was written on the magazine of one of the weapons used by Brenton Harrison Tarrant, the perpetrator of the livestreamed Islamophobic killing spree in Christchurch, New Zealand, on 15 March 2019. Tarrant also named Traini as one of the sources of inspiration for the attack, which resulted in 51 deaths, because he took "a stand against ethnic and cultural genocide".

Judicial truth, on the one hand, and the memoryscape provided by Wikipedia, on the other, support the qualification of the Macerata event as racist and – to some extent – terrorist. The Italian Twitter-sphere, and more generally its public sphere, did not. A DMO tried to bring into the public arena a strong condemnation of the shooting as a terrorist and racist action but failed to spread this widely shared definition of the attack outside its original boundaries. In the context of widespread – but not unanimous – optimism about the capacity of social media to provide the infrastructure for a networked framing of events and a connective action for social movements, the failure of this DMO – after its initial resonance – provides insights for the ongoing debate.

We identified factors both external and internal to the social media platform that were relevant for the fate of the DMO. As for external factors, on one hand, the legacy media and political actors – trapped by the long-standing frame of "immigration-as-security-problem" and by fears of backing a loser ahead of the upcoming elections – were not interested in framing the Macerata attack as terrorism, thereby presenting a great obstacle to the networked framing operated by the DMO. On the other hand, they influenced the emotional resonance of the attack, downplaying the sense of a national crisis, refraining from organising a highly visible institutional ceremony – helped in this regard by the lack of deaths – and undermining the community reaction, thus discouraging a widely attended public ritual. In this way, the offense to collectively held sentiments did not generate the solidarity – through the ritualization of judgement and condemnation (Hawdon et al. 2010) – that is common in response to publicly recognized terror attacks. Or, one could even say, the political elite courted other sentiments, or unspoken assumptions, concerning the suprematist order that discriminates between precious–autochthonous, white–lives and expendable ones.

Moreover, both TV and the press paid little attention to what was happening on social media: TV reports quoted tweets and posts either to portray stereotypical reactions of hate speech by social media users or to provide live coverage of the antifascist rally with short videos recorded by citizen journalists (Piccoli 2020); the press mentioned only a few selected posts and tweets from politicians and public intellectuals in a sort of "opinion review" (Johansson and Lehti 2017), thus staging an apparent multivocal debate while largely neglecting what was actually happening on social media (Colombo and Quassoli 2020).

All these external conditions in turn affected the way the discussion proceeded internally on Twitter. First, its porosity to frames coming from the traditional media diminished the original contribution brought by those claiming that the event in Macerata was a terror attack, borrowing instead alternative narratives that sparked fragmentation within the Antiracism field. This was particularly evident in the case of the junk news about the Giornata del ricordo, the perfect "counter-event" to defuse the political and ritual effects of the antiracist mobilisation (Pilati 2020). Second, the strong political polarisation in the political field was mirrored – often with the same voices – on the social media platform, where the two distinct Antiracism and Nativism echo chambers communicated very little between each other and were characterised by high verticality. However, the Nativism echo chamber was clearly less fragmented, thus enabling the far right to stand their ground and

---

[17] Upfront in the English and Spanish versions, or using this tag in the Categories section:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macerata_shooting https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiroteo_en_Macerata_de_2018
https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anschlag_in_Macerata. See Ricci (2020) for a thorough analysis.
[18] https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attentato_di_Macerata

ultimately prevail. In sum, this vertical, consistent, and compact community of users engaged in a long, heated flame war, transforming the nascent DMO into a polarised crowd. By 10 February its novel frame had almost completely disappeared, having reverted into a more traditional left vs. right conflict.

In cases of mild political polarisation, in the absence of impending elections, and where the media are more independent from the political sphere, a DMO would have a greater chance of influencing the public debate and actions. However, in the present situation, when the political elite has succeeded in the recolonization of the social media sphere by deploying platoons of followers ready to retweet its messages, the infrastructure of Twitter, Facebook and the like does not seem able to provide the space for DMOs to successfully frame the public debate. In the context of a hybrid media system (Chadwick 2017) and the re-intermediation of the social media sphere (Robles-Morales and Córdoba-Hernánde 2019), with its increasingly vertical structure and permeability to the overall political-media arena, Twitter seems to be able to operate at full capacity only when aligned with the dominant political framework, as other case studies on the consequences of terrorist attacks have shown (Al Nashmi 2018; Payne 2018; Giaxoglou 2018).

Further comparative research is needed to account for the complex interactions between legacy and social media in an increasingly intertwined public sphere. In the case of the fate of DMOs, our distinction between internal and external factors can provide a useful starting point, especially when scholars seek a picture more complex than that provided by studies focused on a single hashtag – where counter frames may have migrated to different flags, like the well-known #jenesuispascharlie. Our analysis highlights that the role of institutional actors (both political and media), their frames backing or countering the networked framing, and the structure of institutional and public networks and alliances both inside and outside social media have all proven to be decisive factors for the ability of insurgent communities to influence the wider society.

References

Al Nashmi, E. (2018), "From selfies to media events", *Digital Journalism*, 6(1): 98–117.

An, J., H. Kwak, Y. Mejova, and S. Alonso (2016), "Are you Charlie or Ahmed? Cultural pluralism in Charlie Hebdo response on Twitter", in Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence *(ICWSM)* (ed.), *Proceedings of the 10th International AAII Conference on Web and Social Media*: 2–11.

Anselmi, G., M. Maneri, and F. Quassoli (2020a), "Un attentato «quasi-terroristico». Macerata, Twitter e le opportunità dell'arena pubblica", *Comunicazionepuntodoc*, 23: 17–36.

Anselmi, G., M. Maneri, and F. Quassoli (2020b), "Da Charlie Hebdo a Macerata. Twitter, gli attentati terroristici e i rituali di riparazione", in M. Maneri e F. Quassoli (eds.), *Un attentato "quasi terroristico". Macerata 2018, il razzismo e la sfera pubblica al tempo dei social media*, Roma: Carocci.

Arvidsson, A., A. Caliandro, M. Airoldi, and S. Barina (2015), "Crowds and value: Italian Directioners on Twitter, *Information, Communication & Society*, 4462(June): 1–19.

Barisione, M., and A. Ceron (2017), "A digital movement of opinion? Contesting austerity through social media", in Barisione M. and A. Michailidou (eds.), *Social Media and European Politics: Rethinking Power and Legitimacy in the Digital Era*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 77–104.

Barisione, M., A. Michailidou , and M. Airoldi (2017), "Understanding a digital movement of opinion: The case of #RefugeesWelcome", *Information, Communication & Society,* 22(1): 1–20.

Batorski, D., and I. Grzywińska (2018), "Three dimensions of the public sphere on Facebook", *Information, Communication & Society,* 21(3): 356–74.

Benigno, F. (2018), *Terrore e terrorismo. Saggio storico sulla violenza politica*, Torino: Einaudi.

Bennett, W.L., and A. Segerberg (2012), "The logic of connective action", *Information, Communication & Society*, 15(5): 739–68.

Blondel, V., J-L. Guillaume, R. Lambiotte, and E. Lefebvre (2008), "Fast Unfolding of Communities in Large Networks", *Journal of Statistical Mechanics Theory and Experiment,* 1–12.

Caliandro, A., G. Anselmi, and V. Sturiale (2020), "Fake news, Covid-19 e Infodemia: Un esempio di ricerca sociale in real-time su Twitter", *Mediascapes Journal*, 15: 174-188.

Caliandro, A., and A. Gandini (2016), *Qualitative research in digital environments: A research toolkit,* London: Routledge.

Castells, M. (2009), *Communication Power*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chadwick, A. (2017), *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power, 2nd ed.*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Colombo, M.. and F. Quassoli (2020), "L'attentato di Macerata dai social alla stampa. Inter-discorsività e ri-contestualizzazione", in Maneri M., and F. Quassoli (eds.), *Un attentato "quasi terroristico". Macerata 2018, il razzismo e la sfera pubblica al tempo dei social media*, Roma: Carocci, pp. 39–60

Cooper, H.H.A. (2001), "Terrorism: The problem of definition revisited", *American Behavioral Scientist,* 44(6): 881–93.

De Graaf, B., and B. De Graaff (2010), "Bringing politics back in: The introduction of the "performative power" of counterterrorism", *Critical Studies on Terrorism,* 3(2): 261–75.

Daniels, J. (1997) *White Lies. Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality in White Supremacist Discourse*, London: Routledge.

Driscoll, K., and S. Walker (2014), "Big data, big questions| Working within a black box: Transparency in the collection and production of big Twitter data", *International Journal of Communication,* 8(20): 1745-1764.

Durkheim, E. (2014) [1893], *The Division of Labor in Society*, New York: Free Press.

Eldridge, S., L. García-Carretero, and M. Broersma (2019), "Disintermediation in social networks: Conceptualizing political actors' construction of publics on Twitter", *Media and Communication,* 7(1): 271–85.

Eriksson, M. (2015), "Managing collective trauma on social media: the role of Twitter after the 2011 Norway attacks", *Media, Culture and Society,* 38(3): 365–80.

Gerbaudo, P. (2012), *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism*, London: Pluto Press.

Giaxoglou, K. (2018), "#JeSuisCharlie? Hashtags as narrative resources in contexts of ecstatic sharing", *Discourse, Context & Media*, 22: 13–20.

Giglietto, F., and Y. Lee (2015), "To be or not to be Charlie: Twitter hashtags as a discourse and counter-discourse in the aftermath of the 2015 Charlie Hebdo shooting in France", *CEUR Workshop Proceedings*, 1395(October): 33–37.

Goldberg, D. T. (2006), "Racial Europeanization", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 29(2): 331–64.

Gonzalez-Bailon, S., N. Wang, A. Rivero, J. Borge-Holthoeferd, and Y. Morenocef (2014), "Assessing the bias in samples of large online networks", *Social Networks*, 38: 16–27.

Granovetter, M. (1973), "The strength of weak ties", *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6): 1360–1380.

Guareschi, M., and F. Rahola (2019), "Mister Terrorism. Su un libro e una recensione", *Studi culturali*, XVI(1): 117-127.

Hawdon, J., J. Ryan, and L. Agnich (2010), "Crime as a source of solidarity: A research note testing Durkheim's assertion", *Deviant Behavior*, 31(8): 679–703.

Johansson, M., and L. Lehti, L. (2017), "The digital agora of social media: Introduction", *Discourse Context and Media* 19: 1–4.

Lentin, A. (2020), *Why Race Still Matters*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

Maneri, M. (2013), "Si fa presto a dire "sicurezza": Analisi di un oggetto culturale", *Etnografia e ricerca qualitativa* 2: 283–309.

Maneri, M., A. Pogliano, G. Anselmi, and F. Piccoli (2022) "Migration narratives in traditional and social media. The case of Italy", *BRIDGES Working Papers*, October 2022

Meraz, S. and Z. Papacharissi (2013), "Networked gatekeeping and networked framing on #Egypt", *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 18(2): 138–66.

Morozov, E. (2011), *The Net Delusion: How Not to Liberate the World*, London: Penguin UK.

Mugny, G. (1982), *The Power of Minorities*, London: Academic Press.

Nelson, L. K. (2017), "Computational grounded theory: A methodological framework", *Sociological Methods & Research*, 49(1): 3-42.

Netanyahu, B. (ed. 1986) *Terrorism. How The West Can Win*, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Noelle-Neumann, E. (1974), "The spiral of silence: A theory of public opinion", *Journal of Communication*, 24(2): 43–51.

Nossek, H. (2008), "'News media'–media events: Terrorist acts as media events", *Communications*, 33: 313–330.

Olson, M. (1965), *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Papacharissi, Z., and M- Oliveira (2012), "Affective news and networked publics: The rhythms of news storytelling on #Egypt", *Journal of Communication*, 62(2): 266–82.

Payne, R. (2018), ""Je suis Charlie": Viral circulation and the ambivalence of affective citizenship", *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 21(3): 277–92.

Piccoli, F. (2020) "I fatti di Macerata nei TG. Frame, intermedialità ed ecosistema mediale", in Maneri M., and F. Quassoli (eds.), *Un attentato "quasi terroristico". Macerata 2018, il razzismo e la sfera pubblica al tempo dei social media*, Roma: Carocci, pp. 61–78.

Pilati, F. (2020), "Molte piattaforme, un'unica storia: La junk news dei cori inneggianti alle foibe e la manifestazione antifascista di Macerata", in Maneri M., and F. Quassoli (eds.), *Un attentato "quasi terroristico". Macerata 2018, il razzismo e la sfera pubblica al tempo dei social media*, Roma: Carocci, pp. 79–94.

Rainie, L., and Wellman, B. (2012), *Networked: The New Social Operating System*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Rattansi, A. (2005), "The Uses of Racialization: The Time-spaces and Subject-objects of the Raced Body", in Murji, K. and J. Solomos (eds.) *Racialization: Studies in Theory and Practice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 271–301.

Ricci, O. (2020), "Così vicino, così lontano. Le voci di Wikipedia sull'attentato di Macerata", in Maneri, and F. Quassoli (eds.), *Un attentato "quasi terroristico". Macerata 2018, il razzismo e la sfera pubblica al tempo dei social media*, Roma: Carocci, pp. 96–111.

Robles-Morales, JM., and A.M. Córdoba-Hernández (2019), *Digital Political Participation, Social Networks and Big Data Disintermediation in the Era of Web 2.0*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Rogers, R. (2013), *Digital Methods*, Boston: MIT Press.

Said, E. (1986), "The Essential Terrorist", *The Nation Magazine*, (14 June 1986): 828-33

Stage, C. (2013), "The online crowd: a contradiction in terms? On the potentials of Gustave Le Bon's crowd psychology in an analysis of affective blogging", *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory*, 14(2): 211–26.

Törnberg, P., and J. Uitermark (2021), "For a heterodox computational social science", *Big Data & Society*, 8(2).

Tremayne, M. (2014), "Anatomy of protest in the digital era: A network analysis of Twitter and Occupy Wall Street", *Social Movement Studies*, 13(1): 110–26.

Tromble, R. (2018), "Thanks for (actually) responding! How citizen demand shapes politicians' interactive practices on Twitter", *New Media & Society*, 20(2): 676–97.

Venturini, T., M. Jacomy, and P. Jensen (2021), "What do we see when we look at networks: Visual network analysis, relational ambiguity, and force-directed layouts", *Big Data & Society*, 8(1): 1–16.

Weimann, G. (1987), "Media events: The case of international terrorism", *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 31(1): 21–39

Zolo, D. (2005), "Le ragioni del" terrorismo globale", *Iride*, 18(3).