

**Title:** 2013 Sardinia floods. Exploring conversations on Twitter among citizens, institutions and Twitstars

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### **Abstract**

Social media have served as powerful tools for emergency management and disaster relief in many recent emergency situations worldwide. Among other social media, Twitter appears as one of the most interesting platforms during natural disasters: the large amount of disaster-related conversations taking place on Twitter during and after ‘acute events’; the prevalence of public accounts; the role of some specific features, such as the RT (retweet) feature, and of the ‘public’ dimension of #hashtag conversations, in making Twitter a suitable platform for information spread. While in many countries institutions appear to be fully aware of the potential of social media during disasters, previous research on the Italian context shows that Italian public institutions don’t tribute high efforts in communicating trough social media during “acute events”; moreover, even when institutions use social media accounts in such contexts, they appear far less *influential* than other social media users (be they “Twitstars” or common users).

Our research focuses on the Twitter activity related to the heavy floods that occurred in Sardinia in November 2013, with regard to the hashtag #allertameteoSAR. As institutional social media communication was generally lacking, the hashtag witnessed a user-driven shift: at the beginning it was used as a general-purpose hashtag; afterwards, some active Twitter users succeeded in transforming it into the “(un)official” hashtag for disaster recovery-related conversations. While a major role in promoting such a shift has been played by local “(micro)Twitstars”, celebrity accounts (well-known Italian pop-stars) appear as the most influential, having received the highest number of mentions and retweets.

We analyze the whole dataset of the tweets with hashtag #allertameteoSAR that have been produced during the first week of the Sardinian floods (around 90.000 tweets have been

extracted through GNIP “Historical Power Track”). Our research goals include: - giving a quantitative account of Twitter activity, analyzing information spread and patterns of influence, exploring the interactions between citizen-generated content, institutional communication, information by media outlets and by celebrities, analyzing the strategies that lead to turning a “generic” Twitter hashtag conversation into a more practical - disaster-recovery oriented – conversation. Our research integrates quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative side includes automated data analysis and activity metrics; content analysis; moreover, a specific description of the subset of geolocalized tweets will be carried out through a socio-spatial analysis. Such quantitative methods are integrated with a qualitative tweet analysis.

**Title:** The Disaster Publics

**Bio:** Kurniawan Adi Saputro is a PhD student at Sheffield Hallam University, UK ([kurniawansaputro@gmail.com](mailto:kurniawansaputro@gmail.com)).

### **Abstract**

The development of social media begs particular question to the study of public, namely whether social media allow for new opportunities for the constitution of publics. To answer the question, I employ a processual approach that pays particular attention to how the mechanism works at each sequence of the constitution of publics in disaster. The case was the constitution of publics in response to the eruption of Mt. Merapi in Indonesia in 2010. In particular, I examine the emergence of the publics who complained to the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) about a television show that spread a rumour. The rumour of impending catastrophe was spread by the most popular Indonesian gossip show called *Silet*, two days after the biggest series of eruption. The publics responded by making ‘spontaneous’ calls for action on three different platforms: Facebook, Twitter, and Kaskus (local online forum), which resulted in an unprecedentedly high number of complaints in the history of KPI.

Through interviews with proponents of the collective complaint, survey of the complainers, and examination of the complaint archives and social media archives, I reconstructed the transformation of the television audiences into publics. I found three mechanisms were at work. First, since the audiences acted as separate individuals, to realise their collectivity the audiences represented *the people* using discursive figures, such as witness, victim, expert, and fellow. Second, their complaints were aggregated by the socio-technical arrangement of the online system into a singular voice. And, third, the aggregated voice was mobilised by KPI to strengthen its role as the regulator of the Indonesian broadcasting system.

In addition to identifying the stages of transformation of the publics, I identified three routes taken by the audiences who complained. The first route was from watching television to visiting the website of KPI; the second was from social media to the KPI’s website; and the third was from their social circles to KPI’s website. The three starting points were not independent of each other, but they overlapped. The empirical investigation also revealed the role of enablers, namely those who did not file the complaints themselves but created the

information common that could be used by the potential complainers when they wanted to inform themselves and/or to take an action.

**Title:** Collective Outrage in Social Media – When and Why Online Crowds Do (Not) Hide Behind Anonymity

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### **Abstract**

The power of traditional media to publicly scandalize factual or alleged norm violations has long been acknowledged. With the rising participation of an internet public, however, the enforcement of social control increasingly shifts to new, collective, and unregulated forms within social media. As a battleground for ideological conflicts, it allows online crowds to express and enforce - sometimes hostilely - their ideological values.

In this context, one increasingly occurring phenomenon is online collective outrage. It describes a great amount of hostile critique as a tool to publicly vent anger against public figures. Such as in cases of corporate wrongdoings, political gaffes, celebrities not keeping in line, and other social or moral violators. In popular debates, such hostile storms of critique are repeatedly attributed to the anonymity of online users. The social context, however, is largely ignored as a contributing factor, although collective outrages are embedded in a political, economic, and ideological context. This leaves some questions unanswered: Besides anonymity, may there be other, contextual factors which explain the occurrence of online outrage? Under what contextual conditions do online users prefer to express hostile critique anonymously? When do they abstain from anonymity? A comprehensive, contextualized model with representative, observed data on such interactions from an academic perspective is largely lacking.

This paper challenges the simple assumption that anonymity is the main factor in explaining the occurrence of online collective outrage. It aims to put forward the antithesis that more complex, contextual factors moderate the relationship between anonymity and the scope of online hostility. As a first step, this study explores how far anonymity may explain online hostility. In a second step, it analyzes how contextual factors such as characteristics of the hostile users (e.g. a fairness motivation), the accused person (e.g. its status) and group dynamics of a protest event (e.g. its controversy) may explain hostility. In a third and final step, it explores how the interaction of anonymity and contextual factors may increase or decrease the expected utility of anonymity for hostility. This is investigated through a quantitative analysis of 1623 German online petitions from 2011-2013 (~ 500,000

comments). Overall, the systematic exploration into the causal interactions leading to collective online hostility may contribute to a more complex understanding and prediction of this phenomenon.