

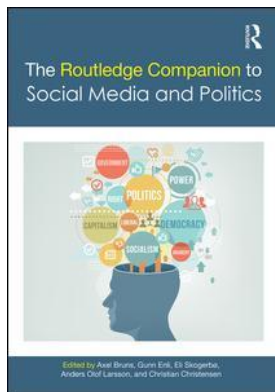
This article was downloaded by: 10.3.97.143

On: 03 Oct 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



## The Routledge Companion to Social Media and Politics

Axel Bruns, Gunn Enli, Eli Skogerbø, Anders Olof Larsson, Christian Christensen

### Every Crisis Is a Digital Opportunity

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315716299.ch12>

Yannis Theocharis

**Published online on: 21 Dec 2015**

**How to cite :-** Yannis Theocharis. 21 Dec 2015, *Every Crisis Is a Digital Opportunity from: The Routledge Companion to Social Media and Politics* Routledge

Accessed on: 03 Oct 2023

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315716299.ch12>

**PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT**

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

## 12

# EVERY CRISIS IS A DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY

## The Aganaktismenoi Movement's Use of Social Media and the Emergence of Networked Solidarity in Greece

*Yannis Theocharis*

### Introduction

In late 2009, many of the most widely read international news outlets dedicated their cover page to news and commentary about the unfolding 'Greek tragedy.' Many analysts voiced the concern that Greece's economic crisis could spread into other heavily indebted countries, which would ignite a European sovereign debt crisis. After widely criticised policy manoeuvres (and in exchange for multi-billion euro bailouts) the Greek government signed a series of memoranda with the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (the so-called troika), which committed it to tough austerity measures that quickly started tearing the country's social fabric apart. The public's response was immediate and strong: massive, and often violent, social unrest, including mass demonstrations, strikes, riots, and occupations of public institutions.

In May 2011, with Greece's two-party system near collapse, the Aganaktismenoi (or 'indignant citizens') movement emerged. It was a bottom-up anti-austerity initiative that was not only incited by, but was also closely affiliated to and resembled, the Spanish 15M movement (named after the beginning of the Madrid protests on 15 May 2011), also known as *Indignados*. The Aganaktismenoi sought to serve as a new political voice representing a new generation of protesters, which would be radically different from the left-wing labour union activists that have been filling the capital's streets over the last several decades. The Aganaktismenoi also claimed to be non-partisan and non-violent, and to support greater citizen intervention in politics through direct democratic practices. While some members of the public supported the movement's aims and saw it as a first and productive effort to increase the citizens' voice in policy making, others rejected it as an immature, politically uninformed, and aimless gathering of disillusioned and outraged citizens that would achieve nothing and quickly be forgotten.

Regardless of how one evaluates the overall impact of Aganaktismenoi, their extensive use of social media sets it apart from previous mobilisations in the country. The movement's mobilisation took place entirely via social networking sites and microblogs (Ekathimerini 2012), which conforms to recent observations elsewhere in Europe suggesting that protesters have been recruited in recent years using more open mobilisation channels (Verhulst & Walgrave 2009; Klandermans et al. 2014), especially digital media (Bennett et al. 2008). Most importantly, this mobilisation is in striking contrast to the organisation-based protests that have taken place in the country for many decades, which were mainly organised—and brought to the streets—by the 'usual suspects', such as labour union and political party activists (Rüdig & Karyotis 2013a). Indeed, the protesters who filled Syntagma (Constitution) Square in Athens during the Aganaktismenoi mobilisations displayed a rather unusual profile.

Although the movement's formal institutional outcomes were not significant (Sotiropoulos 2014), it had important and visible ramifications for Greek civil society, in large part due to the extensive and innovative use of social media. In this chapter I argue that social media have presented Greek citizens with five unique opportunities. *First*, to self-organise and coordinate their opposition to the government's unpopular measures without the support of traditional political organisations. *Second*, to establish solidarity ties and extend their voice well beyond Greece through cooperation with similar anti-austerity movements elsewhere in Europe. *Third*, to mobilise a different segment of the population than in previous protests in Greece. *Fourth*, to create a loosely connected online network of individuals that would maintain ties long after the end of the mobilisations and which could be immediately activated when needed, helping bottom-up solidarity initiatives relying on social media to find an audience and recruit volunteers. *Finally*, and perhaps most importantly, to give Greek citizens the opportunity to strengthen civil society by creatively implementing social media-based civic innovations.

The chapter is organized as follows. First, it introduces some theoretical considerations about the impact of social media on collective action organisation and provides some contextual information about the use of these tools for protest organisation in Greece. Focusing on Twitter, it then discusses the structure of the Aganaktismenoi network. It documents some of the key aspects of its operation and suggests that there are indications that the Aganaktismenoi mobilisations represented a crowd-enabled connective action mobilisation. Before concluding with a discussion of the consequences of social media use during the Aganaktismenoi mobilisations on Greek civil society, the chapter shows how networks established during the mobilisations were subsequently used to support bottom-up solidarity initiatives.

### **Social Media, Political Action, and Organisational Change: Theoretical Considerations**

In the past decade, much of the scholarship focusing on the transformative effect of information and communication technologies has investigated the Internet's role in political mobilisation. The strengthening of the communication strategies of advocacy groups and social movements, and the addition of Internet-enabled and Internet-supported action repertoires, have been among the many changes brought about by the Internet (Merry 2012; Van Laer & Van Aelst 2010; Chadwick 2007; Vegh 2003).

Some of the best-documented outcomes of these changes are the empowerment of campaign practices like fundraising and the facilitation of activist network collaboration and coalition building among organisations (Bennett 2003; Kahn & Kellner 2004; Juris 2005; Postmes & Brunsting 2002). Although the adoption of the Internet seems to have forever altered the mobilisation strategies of social movements and activist groups, the extent to which these changes have fundamentally affected (rather than simply magnified) the underlying processes that bring people to the streets remains a contentious topic.

The emergence of more collaborative and social networking-oriented Web 2.0 tools has reignited the debate about how central a role information and communication technologies play in the organisation of collective action. Over the last five years, millions of people across the globe, from Cairo and New York to Madrid and Hong Kong, have used platforms such as Facebook and Twitter—and their mobile versions—to become more informed about the heated social and political issues facing their countries (Castells 2012). In the process, they have become (often accidentally) more connected with others who happen to share their frustrations, values and aspirations; have taken advantage of numerous social media-enabled opportunities to encourage their networks to support specific causes; and have been invited (and persuaded) by friends or acquaintances to take to the streets (Gerbaudo 2012; Tufekci & Wilson 2012). Adding a score of highly customisable and cheap ways to engage with political and social issues—such as creating groups, organising events, sharing hashtags, and uploading videos—social media are considered to be agents of change in the field of collective action (Bennett & Segerberg 2013; Earl & Kimport 2011; Tufekci 2014).

A central question in the field, however, is whether social media have fundamentally changed the dynamics of political mobilisation. Two theoretical approaches address this question. The first argues that social media have not altered the fundamental dynamics of participation; rather, participation levels and the diversity of participatory forms have increased to the point that they are ‘supersized’ (Earl & Kimport 2011, p. 71). The second approach argues that the emergence and widespread use of Web 2.0 platforms (see Bruns 2008) is creating a new model of mobilisation. This type of mobilisation has three key elements (for an in-depth discussion, see Bimber et al. 2012; Bennett & Segerberg 2013). First, Web 2.0 platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have the capacity to dramatically reduce the costs of organising and participating in collective action through embedded features, such as group and event creation (and many others). A second element is that user-generated political content can be easily personalised and adapted to one’s values, identity, and self-expressive inclinations. The third element is that such content can be easily communicated across social networks of friends, acquaintances or simple ‘followers’, facilitating organisation without the need for, or the support of, formal organisations or other traditional mobilising agents. By assuming that social media is the central organising agent, this protest organisation logic—which some argue renders organisations’ long-established resource mobilising role (see McCarthy & Zald 1977) less relevant (Tufekci 2014)—has been understood as one of ‘connective action’ (Bennett & Segerberg 2013). In its ideal form, the logic of connective action helps crowds organise protest acts using digital media communication as the primary organisational agent; the brokering functions of formal organisations are not needed. One of the core consequences of this model change is that a new type of protester may be emerging (Earl 2014; Earl et al. 2013; Earl & Kimport 2011;

Chadwick 2012): the skilful young social media user who is occasionally (and ephemerally) mobilised by calls for action in her news feed, is not affiliated with any formal organisations (but contributes information from the demonstration using the protest event's official hashtag), has not previously been politically involved, and is more prone to participating in a one-off mobilisation or protest event that expresses her values and identity preferences.

### Mobilisation in the Aganaktismenoi Movement

Greece adopted Internet technologies later than other countries in the region and is still at the low end of European Internet penetration rates (68 per cent). Thus, it was not among the first countries to see a popularisation of social media use (and hence their extensive use during protest events). In 2011, only around 30,000 Internet users had a Twitter account, and less than half of the country's six million Internet users were on Facebook (Internet World Stats 2014; Communication Effect 2011). Yet, there has been a radical rise in the number of Facebook and Twitter users over the last five years. An estimated 4.5 million Greeks have a Facebook account, which, in terms of proportion of Facebook users, is almost equal to rates in Spain and Italy but much lower than in the UK, Sweden, and Norway (Kemp 2014). Most of those (nearly three million) access social media on their mobile devices (Kemp 2014). Although Twitter users are substantially fewer—around 370,000 at the time of writing—Twitter it is the preferred tool for actively following the latest developments and its users believe it has fairly trustworthy information (Monitor 2014; ELTRUN 2013).

The Aganaktismenoi movement, the most visible public reaction to the crisis, was predominantly a movement of citizens completely disillusioned with the party system and with any notion of 'left' and 'right', who were devoid of any trust in the established political elite, the labour unions and the media (Sotiropoulos 2014). Much of the movement's rhetoric emphasised the lack of avenues for political expression and representation, and the high levels of corruption among politicians (*To Vima* 2012). They criticised the media particularly strongly—especially traditional media channels, which they asserted were highly corrupt and accountable for the lack of credible political reporting (and reporting about the movement). Facebook and Twitter were alleged to be the main organising platforms of the Aganaktismenoi protest events, especially the major mobilisation of May 25 (Ekathimerini 2012; Ethnos 2011). The calls for participation through the Aganaktismenoi's Facebook page and the hashtag #greekrevolution encouraged citizens to meet at Athens' Syntagma Square and in other Greek cities to protest peacefully without party banners. Although the number of protesters is difficult to determine, the most commonly accepted estimate is 140,000 at the movement's peak (Sotiropoulos 2014, p.22). Inspired by Madrid's 'acampadas' (encampments) during the 15M protests, some protesters also occupied Syntagma Square and held regular daily meetings and general assemblies until the protests gradually faded out in July.

Since organisations—especially labour unions—have played a crucial role in Greece's protest culture over the last 50 years (Rüdig & Karyotis 2013b), the Aganaktismenoi protesters' mobilisation via social media was a novel feature (*To Vima* 2012). Although such platforms were used to organise past protests (see, for example, Tsaliki 2010), the response to this call to action was far greater than that of any previous social

media-enabled (or social media-supported) protest event. The size of the mobilisation thus raises a number of stimulating questions with regards to the organisational role of these platforms: How were social media used for mobilisation purposes? Is there any evidence that this mobilisation was close to the ideal type of crowd-enabled connective action, or did organisations play a role (albeit a subtle one) simply by providing personalised action frames (Bennett & Segerberg 2013)? If this was indeed a case of connective action, how did the Aganaktismenoi build their network of support, and what did that network look like? Was the mobilised crowd composed of a ‘new’ type of protester? Finally, since the movement produced little policy impact, did the mobilisations nevertheless have other social or political repercussions? And what role did social media play in them?

### An Example of Connective Action?

There is very little research on the use of social media during the Aganaktismenoi mobilisations, and even less empirical evidence from the protests on the ground (but see the comparative studies by Theocharis et al. 2015; Lu et al. 2012). Yet, the Aganaktismenoi, who emerged a few days after Spanish protesters in Madrid raised a poster with the sentence ‘Be quiet, the Greeks are sleeping,’ shared many characteristics with the 15M movement that make them closely comparable, including the intensive use of social media for organisational purposes. Insightful studies by Anduiza and colleagues and others (Anduiza et al. 2014; see also González-Bailón et al. 2011; Bennett & Segerberg 2013; also see the chapter by Anduiza and Cristancho in this volume) demonstrate that the 15M mobilisation was one of the most empirically robust examples of connective action. That is, traditional mobilising agents played no significant role in organising the protests and digital media channels were the predominant organisational and recruitment agents. There are indications that social media may have played a comparably mobilising role in the Aganaktismenoi mobilisations (Theocharis et al. 2015).

Figure 12.1 uses Twitter data collected using Discovertext’s (discovertext.com) social media crawler. It analyses the structure of the Aganaktismenoi network from 31 May 2011 to 25 June 2011 using the open-source social network analysis software Gephi (see Bruns 2012, on the generation of conversation networks on Twitter); an in-depth exploration of the tweets’ content was beyond the scope of this chapter. The network was generated from 17,866 tweets posted under the two most widely used hashtags during the period: #greekrevolution and #25Mgr. Despite the absence of data during the grand protest event of 25 May, as the mobilisations remained vibrant for more than a month, the data cover the peak of the Aganaktismenoi mobilisations and provide a sufficient source for observing Twitter’s role as a mobilising agent. In order to better understand how extensively information was distributed on Twitter (and by whom), the network includes both tweets and retweets. Basic network analysis measures reveal a good deal about the network’s organisation. Traditional political organisations (such as parties, labour unions or other coalitions) played no organisational role on social media. None of the 500 most-active Twitter accounts (which, put together, generated or re-generated most of the distributed content) belonged to a traditional political organisation.<sup>1</sup>

As other studies have shown (Gruzd et al. 2011; Theocharis 2013), most of the content (re)production was (unexpectedly) carried out by well-established and popular

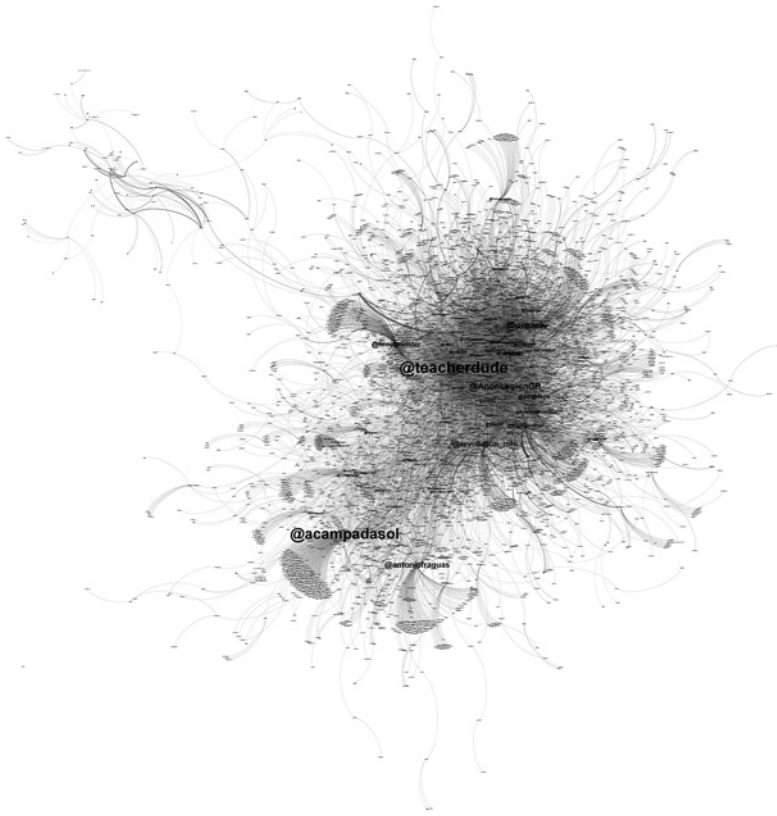


Figure 12.1 Conversation Network Based on 17,866 Tweets Posted under #greekrevolution, #25Mgr, 31 May–25 June 2011

Twitter users (for example, only one of the top 10 most popular Twitter users had fewer than 1,000 followers, while most had more than 5,000). The accounts of alternative media channels and influential blogs (such as @radiobubblenews, @thepressproject, and @prezaty) and the Greek branch of the hacktivist network Anonymous (@Anon-LegionGR) also played a major role in (re)producing content. Considering that Twitter use in Greece by that time amounted to a little more than 30,000 users—and that the top five most popular Greeks tweeting under #greekrevolution alone had more than 50,000 followers combined—it is fair to assume that the vast majority of Greek Twitter users saw in their feed at least some information related to the activities of the movement on a daily basis. Given that Twitter is the most prominent “stitching mechanism used to coordinate . . . actors and platforms within the wider protest ecology” (Bennett et al. 2014, p. 272), it is likely that much of this information was also widely shared on Facebook, reaching a substantially broader audience.

A striking feature of the network is the support and co-production of content by Twitter accounts that also included the main hashtags of the 15M mobilisation

(#15M, #spanishrevolution), which was peaking around the same time. Using Gephi's modularity statistic that attempts to find clusters in the graph by identifying highly interconnected components, two clearly distinct communities can be discerned. Going through the Twitter handles of the 100 most influential Twitter users of the first community, it is evident that the upper part of the network—in dark grey—consists of Greek Twitter users using mainly the #greekrevolution hashtag. By contrast, the lower one, in light grey, consists exclusively of Spanish Twitter users who, along with spreading information in solidarity with the Aganaktismenoi movement using the official hashtag #greekrevolution, bring the two causes together by also using the 15M hashtag. That the two movements were showing solidarity and closely supporting each other online is evident not only from the integration of these two communities but also from the fact that many of the top 10 most influential Twitter users of the #greekrevolution network were Spanish (e.g. the account established by the occupants of the Puerta del Sol Square in Spain (@acampadasol), accounts of other encampments in Spain (@acampadaPalma, @acampadabcn), popular bloggers and journalists (@antoniofraguas), and various self-organised platforms (@democraciareal, @juventudsin).

It is clear that the protests were, as far as online mobilisation using Twitter was concerned, indeed carried out without the involvement of traditional political organisations. Internet-based alternative news channels, bloggers, and the wider Twitter public within and outside Greece were responsible for the (co)production and circulation of content about the events. In this respect, combining these insights with evidence from other studies demonstrating that the Aganaktismenoi demonstrators heard about the events through social media (*To Vima* 2012)<sup>2</sup>, we can cautiously argue that the mobilisations conformed to two important aspects of the crowd-enabled type of connective action: that the prevalent mobilisation channels indeed heavily involved the use of social media, and that no traditional political organisations were involved in organising the events through these avenues.

A final important aspect of crowd-enabled connective action protests that distinguishes them from protests that are organised—or at least supported to some extent—by traditional political organisations is the composition of the protest public. Did the widespread circulation of the Aganaktismenoi movement's activities on social media result in the mobilisation of a different crowd? Recent research shows that non-partisan mobilisation (a rare occurrence in Greek protests which have always been dominated by part factions) preceded the involvement of political parties in protests against successive austerity packages—although after the end of the Aganaktismenoi mobilisations, as the crisis evolved, demonstrations organised by parties of the opposition grew significantly (Koussis & Kanellopoulos 2013; Sotiropoulos 2014, p.10). Furthermore, findings from a unique study on the demonstrators' composition during the anti-austerity protests in Greece (Rüdig & Karyotis 2013a) suggests a contrast between traditional vs. new protesters. Rüdig and Karyotis (2013b) concluded that, once protest experience is taken into account,<sup>3</sup> new protesters who took part in anti-austerity demonstrations and strikes in 2010 did not conform to the typical well-educated protester profile, and were less likely to be members of traditional political organisations or associated with left-wing ideology. Although the mobilisations examined in their study preceded the rise of the Aganaktismenoi by five months (and thus the question of whether social media played a major role in mobilising such a



different crowd should be subjected to further empirical investigation), evidence from interviews with Aganaktismenoi protesters in Syntagma Square shows that the events drew in a similar crowd (*To Vima* 2012). In all, although the causal role of social media mobilisation remains the subject of empirical scrutiny, extant evidence shows that these self-organised protests may have also produced (or contributed to) one of the most important consequences of connective action protests: the mobilisation of a new type of protest participant.<sup>4</sup>

### Connective Action and Beyond: The Emergence of Networked Solidarity

The Aganaktismenoi encampment lasted approximately one month (from late May to mid-July 2011), after which the protests died out (Sotiropoulos 2014). One of the most interesting questions that emerges from these events, is whether the utility of these mobilisation channels and networks extended beyond the end of the protest events. This question has become very relevant, especially after the mainstream international media documented bottom-up solidarity initiatives that emerged after the end of the Aganaktismenoi mobilisations (by people who participated in those mobilisations) (Henley 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). These were largely loosely organised and informal citizen groups that were focusing on, among other things, exchanges of food, clothes and services, provision of health care, community and educational work (a rough overview of such initiatives can be found in Sotiropoulos 2014). The formation and volunteer base of many of these bottom-up initiatives can be traced back to the Syntagma Square protests (Demertzian 2014). Their rise and supportive role to existing civil society organisations is an important consequence of the Aganaktismenoi movement, especially given the dire condition of Greek civil society over the last several years (Sotiropoulos & Karamagioli 2006). Yet, perhaps even more interesting, due to their formation in the virtual space, are the spontaneous, social media-based and social media-enabled networked solidarity initiatives. These initiatives were built upon connective action networks established during the Aganaktismenoi mobilisations (both online and offline), and were maintained long after that period.

A prominent example of such initiatives is #tutorpool, which began with a tweet on 12 December 2011. Following vibrant discussions with a good number of Twitter users from all over Greece, Twitter user @doltsevito, a statistician and teacher, voiced the idea for a networked solidarity initiative focused on the voluntary teaching of children whose parents were in financial difficulties.<sup>5</sup> The plan was to use online social networks to distribute calls for volunteers who could provide children in their area with free one-on-one lessons. Google Maps would help pinpoint the location of the children so that nearby volunteers would know where support was needed. If no one could provide support locally, teachers with the relevant expertise could arrange Skype lessons. In agreement that many schoolchildren whose families had been hit hard by the crisis were losing out, many qualified Twitter users immediately offered to help, and those who were not qualified spread the word with retweets or contributed in other ways (e.g. computer specialists built a website or configured the maps). Three months later, more than 300 families had registered with #tutorpool, which had more than 500 volunteer tutors across Greece (and beyond).



Figure 12.2 Conversation Network Based on 1,100 Tweets Posted under #tutorpool, 11 and 17 November 2012

There is little doubt that many of the people who played an important role in organising the Aganaktismenoi movement by distributing information on Twitter helped #tutorpool reach a large audience and, as a consequence, an unexpectedly large base of volunteers. Although this cannot be substantiated with Twitter data from the days of #tutorpool's beginnings, data from #tutorpool's activity one year later were available to the author. Figure 12.2 uses tweets posted under #tutorpool to depict the Twitter network's activity between 11 and 17 November 2012. Node size is set to out-degree, aiming to capture the most active users in terms of content (re)production. Twitter accounts that were found to have produced content in the #greekrevolution dataset are coloured in black (Twitter account names have been removed for better graph clarity).

The message is fairly clear. More than one third of the 293 Twitter accounts that engaged in activities related to #tutorpool (most of them call for, or redistribute messages about, teachers needed in certain areas) during the given timeframe were also involved in content distribution for the Aganaktismenoi movement. Most importantly, some of them ranked in the top 10 content producers in both datasets. Indeed, as the black nodes on Figure 12.2 demonstrate, very substantial support to, and solidarity with, #tutorpool's endeavour came from pre-existing networks of Twitter users that had been active in organising the Aganaktismenoi more than 18 months earlier. This solidarity network was invaluable for #tutorpool's effort to reach a large audience, build a considerable base of volunteers, and even receive coverage from national and international mainstream media, such as *The Guardian* (Henley 2012a).

## Looking Ahead: A Digital Opportunity for Strengthening Greek Civil Society

This chapter discussed the use of social media, specifically Twitter, by the Aganaktismenoi movement. Such tools set this movement apart from all other previous mobilisations in Greece. In line with at least the main aspects of what Bennett and Segerberg (2013) call the logic of connective action, social media were the prevalent mobilising channels, leading to one of the biggest and probably most diverse—in terms of protester characteristics—protest events in years. This was achieved largely through the use of platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, which gave citizens the opportunity to create groups quickly and easily, and distribute personalisable content<sup>6</sup> about the events across social networks. Much of the personalised political content was co-distributed and co-produced by Spanish Twitter users, which created a strong link and sense of solidarity with the 15M movement.

Although the Aganaktismenoi will be remembered as a peaceful and innovative protest movement, the abrupt end of the mobilisation and the lack of follow-up resulted in a lot of negative coverage and in the supposed vindication of many who, from its beginning, condemned the movement as aimless, apolitical, and immature. Although assessing the movement's impact is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is worth stressing that despite the lack of visible political outcomes (contrary to 15M, which morphed into Podemos, currently a rising political power in Spain—see Fominaya, 2014), the Aganaktismenoi may have had more subtle, but nevertheless significant, ramifications.

Many of the innovative citizen-initiated groups that played a vital role in shoring up (and strengthening) Greece's notoriously weak civil society trace their origins to the Syntagma public meetings (Demertzian 2014). Many of the people who later became organisers of solidarity initiatives and leaders of civic innovations visited the protests and met like-minded people with whom they kept in touch via social media. These communication channels gave them the opportunity to discuss their ideas publicly, find an audience using networks of friends or unknown others with whom they created loose online ties during the Aganaktismenoi mobilisations, and build new solidarity networks.

Importantly, what this chapter reveals is that connective action networks offer a flexibility that may, on certain occasions, have long-lasting consequences and utility for those involved in the self-organisation of protest action—but also for those who were not and got in touch with those networks later on. Once formed, such networks can remain active—albeit on a sort of 'standby mode'—long after the particular mobilisation they were shaped for, and be quickly re-activated to support other mobilisations or smaller initiatives. Highly successful examples such as #tutorpool indicate that social media, especially Twitter, can act as what Putnam calls a 'social glue' that leads to—or at least lays the groundwork for—some sort of social capital generation (for some preliminary evidence that such processes may be at work see Sajuria et al. 2015).

Although much more research is needed in order to understand the precise mechanisms, the type of participants, and the impact of social media-enabled initiatives such as #tutorpool, it is clear that such digital technologies can give creative and willing citizens opportunities to strengthen civil society through self-organised networked solidarity initiatives. Since such initiatives are easily transferable to different political

contexts via online interpersonal networks, weak civil societies in particular can benefit greatly from the opportunities offered by digital technology.

## Notes

- 1 Level of activity (in terms of tweeting or retweeting information) was calculated using the accounts' out-degree centrality, which represents the number of ties that the node directs to others—in this context, when addressing or retweeting another user. It needs to be added that the notion of 'betweenness' centrality is crucial to understanding information distribution (and thus organization) on a Twitter network. The node with the highest betweenness centrality in a network lies in the shortest path between every other pair of nodes. Thus, from an organizational point of view, nodes with high betweenness centrality have a large influence on the network due to their awareness of the information circulating the network and their ability (and influence) to act as information gatekeepers. A calculation of the 500 most influential nodes based on betweenness centrality did not, however, yield different results (compared to out-degree centrality) as to the presence of organizations.
- 2 A summary of the study by Georgiadou and colleagues can be found in a report by the Greek newspaper *To Vima* (2012).
- 3 This is particularly important, given that participation in protests and strikes was a regular feature of Greek life well before the anti-austerity protests. See Rüdiger & Karyotis (2013b, p. 492) and Pappas & O'Malley (2014, p. 1597).
- 4 Parallels with the 15M movement can be drawn here too. As Anduiza and colleagues have shown, Spain had never before experienced street demonstrations of that scale without the involvement of traditional organizations or significant coverage from the mainstream media, while the sociopolitical composition of the demonstrators was also significantly different from the typical very politically active, organizationally affiliated protesters (Anduiza et al. 2014, pp. 751, 762).
- 5 It is (still) broadly accepted that the teaching provided by Greece's high school system is insufficient preparation for a place at university. As a result, private tuition—which often places a very substantial economic burden on Greek families—has, for decades, been necessary for almost anyone planning to enter higher education.
- 6 Personalization included slogans about 'Real Democracy Now!' adapted by the Spanish 15M movement, as well as a lot of creative—and often humorous—content depicting people's common frustration with the governing elites. Photos with thousands of indignant people outside the Greek Parliament with their hands raised in a demeaning gesture common in Greece became one of the symbols of the demonstrations.

## References

- Anduiza, E., Cristancho, C., & Sabucedo, J. M. (2014) "Mobilization through Online Social Networks: The Political Protest of the Indignados in Spain". *Information, Communication & Society*, 17(6), pp.750–764.
- Bennett, L. W. (2003) "Communicating Global Activism". *Information, Communication & Society*, 6(2), pp.143–168.
- Bennett, L. W., Breunig, C., & Givens, T. (2008) "Communication and Political Mobilization: Digital Media and the Organization of Anti-Iraq War Demonstrations in the U.S." *Political Communication*, 25(3), pp. 269–289.
- Bennett, L. W., & Segerberg, A. (2013) *The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bennett, L. W., Segerberg, A., & Walker, S. (2014) "Organization in the Crowd—Looking Ahead". *Information, Communication & Society*, 17(2), pp. 272–275.
- Bimber, B., Flanagan, A. J., & Stohl, C. (2012) *Collective Action in Organizations: Interaction and Engagement in an Era of Technological Change*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bruns, A. (2008) *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life and Beyond: From Production to Producership*, New York: Peter Lang.

- (2012) “How Long is a Tweet? Mapping Dynamic Conversation Networks on Twitter Using Gawk and Gephi”. *Information, Communication & Society*, 15(9), pp.1323–1351.
- Castells, M. (2012) *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Chadwick, A. (2007) “Digital Network Repertoires and Organizational Hybridity”. *Political Communication*, 24(3), pp.283–301.
- Chadwick, A. (2012) “Recent Shifts in the Relationship Between the Internet and Democratic Engagement in Britain and the United States: Granularity, Informational Exuberance, and Political Learning”. In E. Anduiza, J.M. Jensen, & L. Jorba, (eds.) *Digital Media and Political Engagement Worldwide: A Comparative Study*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.39–55.
- Communication Effect (2011) “Twitter in Greece”. Available at: <http://communicationeffect.com/twitter-in-greece/>.
- Demertzian, M. (2014) “Αναζητώντας τους Αγανακτισμένους της πλατείας σήμερα . . .”. *Huffington Post* (GR). Available at: [http://www.huffingtonpost.gr/2014/11/19/story\\_n\\_6177356.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.gr/2014/11/19/story_n_6177356.html).
- Earl, J. (2014) “Something Old and Something New: A Comment on ‘New Media, New Civics’”. *Policy & Internet*, 6(2), pp.169–175.
- Earl, J., & Kimport, K. (2011). *Digitally Enabled Social Change: Activism in the Internet Age*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Earl, J., McKee-Hurwitz, H., Mesinas, A.M., Tolan, M., Arlotti, A. (2013) “This Protest will be Tweeted: Twitter and Protest Policing During the Pittsburgh G20”. *Information, Communication & Society*, 16(4), pp.459–478.
- Ekathimerini (2012) “In Syntagma Square, some see the dawn of a new politics”. Available at: [http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/\\_w\\_articles\\_wsite3\\_1\\_26/06/2011\\_396010](http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_wsite3_1_26/06/2011_396010).
- ELTRUN (2013) “Annual Study of Greek Social Media Users”. Available at: <http://www.eltrun.gr/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/EthsiaEreynaKoinonikhsDiktyoshs2013-4.pdf>.
- Ethnos (2011) “Ο Μάης του Facebook και με ομπρέλες”. *Ethnos*. Available at: <http://www.ethnos.gr/article.asp?catid=22768&subid=2&pubid=63092999>.
- Fominaya, C. F. (2014) “‘Spain is Different’: Podemos and 15-M”. *Opendemocracy*. Available at: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/cristina-flesher-fominaya/‘spain-is-different’-podemos-and-15m>.
- Gerbaudo, P. (2012) *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism*, New York: Pluto Press.
- González-Bailón, S., Borge-Holthoefer, J., Rivero, A., & Moreno, Y. (2011) “The Dynamics of Protest Recruitment through an Online Network”. *Nature*, 1(197).
- Gruzd, A., Wellman, B., & Takhteyev, Y. (2011) “Imagining Twitter as an Imagined Community”. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 55(10), pp.1294–1318.
- Henley, J. (2012a) “Greece on the Breadline: Pooling Resources to Provide an Education”. *The Guardian*. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/blog/2012/mar/14/greece-breadline-pooling-education-resources>.
- Henley, J. (2012b) “Greece on the Breadline: ‘Potato Movement’ Links Shoppers and Farmers”. *The Guardian*. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/blog/2012/mar/18/greece-breadline-potato-movement-farmers>.
- Henley, J. (2012c) “Greece on the Breadline: Volunteer GPs Help Those with Nowhere Else to Go”. *The Guardian*. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/blog/2012/mar/18/greece-on-breadline-volunteer-medics>.
- Internet World Stats (2014) “Internet World Stats: Usage and Population Statistics”. Available at: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats4.htm>.
- Juris, J. S. (2005) “The New Digital Media and Activist Networking within Anti–Corporate Globalization Movements”. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 597(1), pp.189–208.
- Kahn, R., & Kellner, D. (2004) “New Media and Internet Activism: From the ‘Battle of Seattle’ to Blogging”. *New Media & Society*, 6(1), pp.87–95.

- Kemp, S. (2014) *European Digital Landscape 2014*, London. Available at: <http://wearesocial.net/blog/2014/02/social-digital-mobile-europe-2014/>.
- Klandermans, B., van Stekelenburg, J., Damen, M-L., van Troost, D., & van Leeuwen, A. (2014) "Mobilization Without Organization: The Case of Unaffiliated Demonstrators". *European Sociological Review*, 30(6), pp.702–716.
- Koussis, M., & Kanellopoulos, C. (2013) "Large Scale Mobilizations against Austerity Policies and the Memoranda, 2010–2012," paper presented at the *Crisis in Greece Conference*, Athens, 14–15 January.
- Lu, X., Cheliotis, G., Cao, X., Song, Y., & Bressan, S. (2012) "The Configuration of Networked Publics on the Web: Evidence from the Greek Indignados Movement". In *WebSci '12 Proceedings of the 4th Annual ACM Web Science Conference*, New York: ACM, p.1850194. Available at: <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=2380742>.
- McCarthy, J. D., & Zald, M. N. (1977) "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory". *American Journal of Sociology*, 82(6), pp.1212–1241.
- Merry, M. K. (2012) "Environmental Groups' Communication Strategies in Multiple Media". *Environmental Politics*, 21(1), pp.49–69.
- Monitor (2014) "Social Media Monitoring. Social Media Monitoring". Available at: <http://monitor.sidebar.gr/>.
- Pappas, T. S., & O'Malley, E. (2014) "Civil Compliance and 'Political Luddism' Explaining Variance in Social Unrest During Crisis in Ireland and Greece". *American Behavioral Scientist*, 58(12), pp. 1592–1613.
- Postmes, T., & Brunsting, S. (2002) "Collective Action in the Age of the Internet: Mass Communication and Online Mobilization". *Social Science Computer Review*, 20(3), pp.290–301.
- Rüdig, W., & Karyotis, G. (2013a) "Beyond the Usual Suspects? New Participants in Anti-austerity Protests in Greece". *Mobilization*, 18(3), pp.313–330.
- Rüdig, W., & Karyotis, G. (2013b) "Who protests in Greece? Mass opposition to austerity". *British Journal of Political Science*, 44(3), pp.487–513.
- Sajuria, J., vanHeerde-Hudson, J., Hudson, D., Dasandi, N., & Theocharis, Y. (2015) "Tweeting Alone? An Analysis of Bridging and Bonding Social Capital in Online Networks". *American Politics Research*, 43(4), 708–738.
- Sotiropoulos, D. (2014) *Civil Society in Greece in the Wake of the Economic Crisis*. Available at: <http://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/kas.pdf>.
- Sotiropoulos, D., & Karamagioli, E. (2006) *The Greek Civil Society: The Road to Maturity*. Available at: [http://www.civicus.org/media/CSI\\_Greece\\_Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.civicus.org/media/CSI_Greece_Executive_Summary.pdf).
- Theocharis, Y. (2013) "The Wealth of (Occupation) Networks? Communication Patterns and Information Distribution in a Twitter Protest Network". *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 10(1), pp.35–56.
- Theocharis, Y., Lowe, W., van Deth, J. W., & Garcia-Albacete, G. (2015) "Using Twitter to Mobilize Protest Action: Online Mobilization Patterns and Action Repertoires in the Occupy Wall Street, Indignados, and Aganaktismenoi movements". *Information, Communication & Society*, 18(22), pp.202–220.
- To Vima (2012) Η πλατεία ήταν γεμάτη . . . αγανακτισμένων. *To Vima*. Available at: <http://www.tovima.gr/society/article/?aid=467898>.
- Tsaliki, L. (2010) "Technologies of Political Mobilization and Civil Society in Greece: The Wildfires of Summer 2007". *Convergence*, 16(2), pp.151–161.
- Tufekci, Z. (2014) "The Medium and the Movement: Digital Tools, Social Movement Politics, and the End of the Free Rider Problem". *Policy & Internet*, 6(2), pp.202–208.
- Tufekci, Z., & Wilson, C. (2012) "Social Media and the Decision to Participate in Political Protest: Observations From Tahrir Square". *Journal of Communication*, 62(2), pp.363–379.
- Van Laer, J., & Van Aelst, P. (2010) "Internet and Social Movement Action Repertoires". *Information, Communication & Society*, 13(8), pp.1146–1171.

## THE AGANAKTISMENOI MOVEMENT

- Vegh, S. (2003) "Classifying Forms of Online Activism: The Case of Cyberprotests against the World Bank". In M. McCaughey and M.D. Ayers (eds.) *Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge.
- Verhulst, J., & Walgrave, S. (2009) "The First Time is the Hardest? A Cross-National and Cross-Issue Comparison of First-Time Protest Participants". *Political Behavior*, 31(3), pp.455–484.