Movements and Gatekeepers in a Hybrid Media Environment: A Comparison of the Twitter Networks of Corbynism and the People's Vote Movement

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Abstract

Digital technology has recalibrated and become integrated with existing media institutions, practices and power structures. From the perspective of movements, this hybridised media environment presents a new set of opportunities and constraints. Movement messages can be directly disseminated without relying on media 'gatekeepers', and a movement's prominence on digital platforms can translate into much broader reach via the 'legacy' media, which continue to reach the largest audiences. This article compares the extent to which two influential political movements in the UK, the Corbyn movement and the movement for a People's Vote, were able to attract the attention of mainstream media 'gatekeepers' on Twitter. We do so first by identifying core actors in both movements on Twitter, and then editors, political editors and digital editors at major news media outlets on the platform. We find that the People's Vote movement attracted far more attention from editors than the Corbyn movement, largely owing to the extent to which the former integrated some key players from the British news media into its online network.

Keywords: Corbynism, People's Vote, movements, Twitter, social network analysis

Introduction

THAT MEDIA MATTERS to movements is obvious. Some of the first movements to mobilise radicals and workers in Britain—the corresponding societies—benefited from the growth of mail coach networks. The revolutions in America and France were encouraged by the distribution of popular pamphlets, while the success of the Protestant Reformation has been causally tied to the spread of the printing press. In response to political challenges from movements, states have sought to influence the media environment. Overt state censorship is the most obvious example, but political elites have employed more subtle mechanisms as well. Shortly after the French Revolution, for example, a restrictive Newspaper Publication Act in Britain taxed journals in an attempt to halt the spread of radicalism; this act in turn became an object of repeal by radical movements throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. More recently, the approval by the Thatcher government of Rupert Murdoch's takeover of the *Times* helped consolidate a pro-market and Conservative hegemony in Britain. From the perspective of movements, the media environment presents a set of opportunities and constraints; in the language of social movement scholarship, media form an important part of a movement's political opportunity structure.

No wonder, then, that the interaction between movements and the media—in particular, the former's effort to communicate their message and narrative via the latter—has long been a preoccupation of social movement scholars, particularly those interested in how 'interpretative frames' are constructed by movements' interaction with other actors.[1] While the flourishing of social movements in the United States—particularly the protests against the Vietnam War—is sometimes associated with the influence of television, scholars

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[1] For example, J. D. McCarthy, J. Smith and M. N. Zald, *Accessing Public, Media, Electoral, and Governmental Agendas*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 291–311, among many others.

have shown that media institutions in the 1960s followed the political agenda of elites, and tended to delegitimise outsiders.[2] According to Edward Morgan, the mass media has 'helped to shape, marginalize, and ultimately constrain protest movements'.[3] Unsurprisingly the growth of digital media, and social media in particular, has also been accompanied by significant interest in how these technologies have affected movements. Writing in 2015, Manuel Castells welcomed the rise of digitally enabled social movements, which he claimed had the capacity to bring down corrupt governments and fill the vacuum left by a crisis in social trust and political legitimacy. For Castells, 'internet social networks … are spaces of autonomy, largely beyond the control of governments and corporations that had monopolized the channels of communication as the foundation of their power, throughout history'.[4] The role of social media in the so called Arab Spring gave rise to a raft of optimistic commentary and scholarship on the potential for new technology to challenge repressive states. Meanwhile, commentary elsewhere foresaw digital networks as enabling greater democracy and diversity in established media, particularly by challenging the traditional elite orientation of print and broadcast journalism.[5]

This early optimism, however, has given way to growing concerns about the negative influence of the internet on politics; concerns that are frequently bound up with an anxiety about what political commentators refer to as illiberal populism.[6] The experience of Brexit and Donald Trump's presidency has led to widespread debate about the circulation of misinformation and political propaganda online, and an increased awareness that these technologies can be used effectively by conservative as well as egalitarian movements. A related concern has been the extent to which digital media platforms such as Facebook have undermined the traditional business model of private print and broadcast journalism; now referred to as 'legacy media'. Along with well-publicised issues around privacy and targeted advertising, and the realisation that digital media affords significant opportunities for state surveillance, this has given rise to an intuitive sense for many of the toxifying and corrosive affordances of digital media for the public sphere.

This shift in political commentary and scholarship—from what, with hindsight, appears to be an innocent optimism to now, a general pessimism—reflects something of a cyclical tendency in how innovations in communication technology are typically received, as the social movement scholars Fominaya and Gillan have pointed out.[7] Perhaps the most fruitful approach is neither to celebrate nor lament the influence of digital media, but instead to examine the ways in which it is recalibrating, and becoming integrated with, existing institutions, practices and power structures. Given the increasingly hybrid media environment, this means dispensing with some popular dichotomies, considering instead how the old interacts with the new, the legacy media with the digital environment, and how hierarchies that exist offline shape those online, and vice versa.

In the case of Twitter, which is the focus of this article, the social media platform obviously allows for a more diverse range of perspectives than print or broadcast. However, it is also the case that existing social inequalities of 'voice' are readily reproduced. As a non-reciprocal network, Twitter tends towards centralisation. Users generally follow those with more followers than themselves, and the users with the highest following tend to be those with a broader public profile or status.

[2]D. C. Hallin, *The 'Uncensored' War: The Media and Vietnam*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1986; T. Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1980.

[3]E. P. Morgan, *What Really Happened to the 1960s: How Mass Media Culture Failed American Democracy*, Lawrence KS, University Press of Kansas, 2010, p. 11.

[4]M. Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*, New Jersey, John Wiley & Sons, 2010, p. 2.

[5]A. Hermida, '# Journalism: reconfiguring journalism research about Twitter, one tweet at a time', *Digital Journalism*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2013, pp. 295–313.

[6]See, for example, Y. Mounk, *The People Vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is In Danger and How To Save It*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2018.

[7]C. Fominaya and K. Gillan, 'Navigating the technology-media-movements complex', *Social Movement Studies*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2017, pp. 383–402, DOI: 10.1080/14742837.2017.1338943.

For this reason Bastos, Raimundo and Travitzki write that Twitter 'better resembles a mixture of mass communication and face-to-face communication' than the ideal of a horizontal network, or indeed the non-hierarchical metaphor of the platform.[8] Research in journalism studies has shown that Twitter has been thoroughly integrated into the working routines of 'legacy' or 'mainstream' news media; that traditional elite-orientated sourcing patterns have largely been maintained; and that journalists tend to form highly insular clusters. From the perspective of movements operating in a hybrid media environment, Twitter obviously presents certain communicative opportunities. Movement messages can be directly disseminated without relying on media 'gatekeepers'. But equally, a movement actor's prominence on the platform can translate into a much broader reach via mainstream media, since the platform is by far the most popular social media site among journalists, who, as studies have shown, regularly use it for monitoring breaking news, gauging political opinion and identifying sources, commentators and pundits.[9]

One major obstacle to researching social media is the overwhelmingly private nature of the digital space, meaning access to data—now a precious commodity—is hidden behind the corporate curtain. Platforms do, however, usually make certain data readily available via their application programming interfaces (APIs), which affords researchers some fruitful, albeit still limited, avenues for social research. Twitter is the most widely used platform in academic research of social media, a fact that largely owes to the availability of its data in comparison to other companies. This has prompted concerns among some researchers of an 'availability bias'. While we therefore acknowledge calls to study 'across media', Twitter remains a particularly useful platform for our purposes since it is a key site through which movement actors can hope to influence 'legacy' media within an increasingly hybridised media ecology.[10] Our focus here is not on our movements' reach to a general audience, either on Twitter or in the mainstream news media. Rather, we examine the extent to which core actors in the Corbyn movement (or Corbynism) and the movement for a People's Vote (henceforth, the Remain movement) were able to attract the attention of mainstream news media gatekeepers on the platform.

Both these movements were key players in the three to four year period leading up to the 2019 general election. From his surprising election as leader of the Labour Party in 2015, Jeremy Corbyn—in particular, his left-wing political outlook, the enthusiastic movement behind him and the fierce opposition he provoked in his own party and elsewhere—was at the centre of British politics. The Remain movement, which grew in strength over the same period, was initially galvanised by the outcome of the EU referendum in 2016. It mobilised hundreds of thousands of people behind the demand for a second referendum, which it dubbed a 'People's Vote'. The different political and sociological character of these two movements, that were often in tension with one another, may, as we suggest in the conclusion below, help explain the different levels of attention they received from mainstream media gatekeepers.

Methods

In order to identify the core actors in the Corbyn and Remain movements, we began by reviewing existing work on the origin and development of both movements, seeking to identify key individuals and organisations. For the Corbyn movement, we drew in particular on several books, as well as Lewis

[8] M. Bastos, R. Raimundo and R. Travitzki, 'Gatekeeping Twitter: message diffusion in political hashtags', *Media, Culture and Society*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2013, pp. 260–270.

[9] M. Broersma and T Graham, 'Tipping the balance of power. social media and the transformation of political journalism', in A. Bruns, G. Enli, E. Skogerbo, A. O. Larsson and C. Christensen, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Social Media and Politics*, London, Routledge, 2015, pp. 89–103; M. Logan and R. Mourão, 'Political journalists' normalization of Twitter: interaction and new affordances', *Journalism Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2019, pp. 248–66.

[10] E. Vraga, L. Bode, C. Wells, K. Driscoll and K. Thorson, 'The rules of engagement: comparing two social protest movements on YouTube', *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2012, pp. 133–40.

Bassett's own research.[11] There has been far less written about the Remain movement, despite its powerful impact on British politics, including on Corbyn's Labour Party. Thus our review mainly drew on political journalism, including a number of longer-form investigative articles.[12] From these surveys we produced a list of individuals and organisations at the core of each movement, and for each of these we identified a corresponding Twitter account, where one existed. This yielded a total of forty-nine Twitter accounts in the case of the Corbyn movement and sixty-seven in the case of Remain. With these Twitter handles compiled, we then used the Microsoft Excel add-on NodeXL, which facilitates data extraction from Twitter's API, to scrape data from the accounts, including every Twitter account each user follows. Timelines for each user—meaning the users' tweets, retweets and interactions—were also extracted (these were limited at 500 tweets per user). This, and all other data reported here, was collected in October 2020. This time period meant the date of data extraction was after the peaks of both movements. However, we assumed that these online networks would not have significantly decomposed in the interim (an assumption supported by our results).

Having identified all the Twitter accounts followed by each of the core actors in each movement, we were then able to produce two directed follow networks (that is, a network in which the accounts are linked to all the users they follow, and those which follow them); one for each movement. This then allowed us to identify additional accounts that are highly followed by members of each movement. We used this data to augment our original set of core movement actors with a second set who appeared to be central to the movement, but whom were not identified in our literature review. The basic guiding principle here was that additional users should be added if to do so would increase the overall density of the initial follow network. Integrating additional users solely on the number of additional following connections, however, would mean adding users who are highly followed by the core movement actors, but who did not reciprocate. We therefore excluded any users whose following of the core movement actors was less than the average within the initial follow network. In essence, we identified an additional set of Twitter users whose followers and following suggested that they 'belong' within each movement. This augmentation process yielded an additional fifty-one accounts for the Corbyn movement and an additional eighty-five for the Remain movement. The total Twitter accounts for the Corbyn movement elite was therefore 100 and for the Remain movement 152. Three individuals appeared in the networks of both movements, namely the former Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell, the Labour left-wing MP Clive Lewis and the journalist George Eaton.

With Twitter accounts for movement actors now identified, the next step was to establish to what extent the two movements attracted the attention of mainstream media (MSM) gatekeepers on Twitter. Although the term MSM is often used by activists to imply certain characteristics (frequently too left-wing or too right-wing), our working definition of what counts as 'mainstream' here is based simply on the audience reach of news media outlets. To determine this, we used polling data from YouGov, commissioned by the Reuters Institute for its annual 'Digital news report'.[13] As

[11]See, for example, A. Nunns, *The Candidate: Jeremy Corbyn's Improbable Path To Power*, London, OR Books, 2018; O. Jones, *This Land: The Struggle For The Left*, London, Penguin, 2020; G. Pogrund and P. Maguire, *Left Out: The Inside Story Of Labour Under Corbyn*. Lewis Bassett also wrote his PhD on this topic: https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/en/theses/corbynism-and-democracy-a-political-movement-in-and-against-neoliberalism (6763e71c-9ead-49d6-a510-bf21ce6f42d8).html (accessed 9 April 2021).

[12]This list included more than ten such articles. A full list, along with the other data relevant to this study, is available from the authors upon request.

[13]N. Newman, R. Fletcher, A. Kalogeropoulos and R. Nielsen, 'The Reuters Institute digital news report', Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2019. Note that the questionnaire is conducted online. The report notes that 'online samples will tend to under-represent the consumption habits of people who are not online (typically older, less affluent, and with limited formal education). In this sense it is better to think of results as representative of online populations who use news at least once a month.' However, internet penetration in the UK is also 95 per cent, according to the report.

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Table 1: Outlet reach

Outlet	Reach as a percentage (rounded to nearest percent)
BBC	78%
ITV	39%
Sky	31%
Daily Mail	26%
The Sun	20%
The Guardian	18%
The Mirror	16%
Metro	15%
Times	12%
The Telegraph	11%
Channel 4	11%
The Express	8%
London Evening Standard	5%
CNN	4%
Financial Times	4%
Channel 5	4%

part of research conducted in 2019, YouGov captured responses from 2,023 people (weighted to represent a national sample). Respondents were asked which online and offline sources of news they had used in the past week. The responses are aggregated and listed as percentages in Table 1.

With the major UK media outlets identified we then drew up a list of key editorial decision makers at those outlets, or what we refer to here as MSM gatekeepers. We identified relevant senior individuals for each outlet, dividing roughly into editor, political editor and digital editor. In the case of broadcast news (BBC, ITV, Sky, Channel 4, Channel 5), we focussed on editors and political editors at each of the channel's flagship news broadcasts, plus their digital editors (excluding Channel 5 for the latter, which doesn't host additional news via its website). In the case of newspapers, we focussed on editors (online and in print, where this distinction is relevant) and political editors and/or senior political correspondents. For each senior individual we identified a corresponding Twitter account, where one exists (five out of a total of fifty-two individuals lacked Twitter accounts). With the Twitter handles of MSM gatekeepers identified, we then scraped the accounts followed by each, allowing us to identify their following of our two movement networks.

Ultimately, we produced three quantitative measures of our two movements' communicative reach on Twitter. The first is the number of followers a given user has on Twitter. The second is the number of MSM gatekeepers who follow the user. The third is a figure derived from the second, but weighted according to the relative audience reach of the outlet associated with a particular gatekeeper. Our weighting method takes the estimated audience reach of the outlet according to the Reuters Institute and divides it by the number of gatekeepers we included who are associated with the outlet. For example, the BBC is reported to reach 78 per cent of respondents in Reuters' survey and has three individual gatekeepers in our data. Therefore, the weighting score for each gatekeeper is 78 / 3 = 26. The resulting weighted scores aggregated to individual movement accounts are not meaningful except as a relative measure, and we standardise them as a score between 0 and 100, where users followed by no MSM gatekeepers are assigned 0 (of which there are twenty-five), and the individual with the highest overall reach (the journalist Faisal Islam who was followed by thirty-seven of our forty-seven gatekeepers) was assigned a score of 100. A full breakdown of the data used for this study is available on request from the authors.

Findings

Figure 1 is a visualisation of the actors of the Corbyn movement on Twitter, with some accompanying network statistics. There are two node types in this network. The darker nodes are the movement actors identified in our literature review, and the lighter nodes are the accounts added based on a high level of integration into the initial follow network. The nodes in the network visualisation are connected by mutual follows, so as to create a more meaningful network structure. This is why the musician JME is isolated from the network—although he is followed by fifteen of the ninety-nine other users in this network, he does not follow any Twitter users, and therefore has no mutual ties.

There are 7,065 connections between the 100 users. If every account here followed every other in the network there would a total of 9,900. What network scientists call the 'graph density' of the network, therefore, is 0.714,
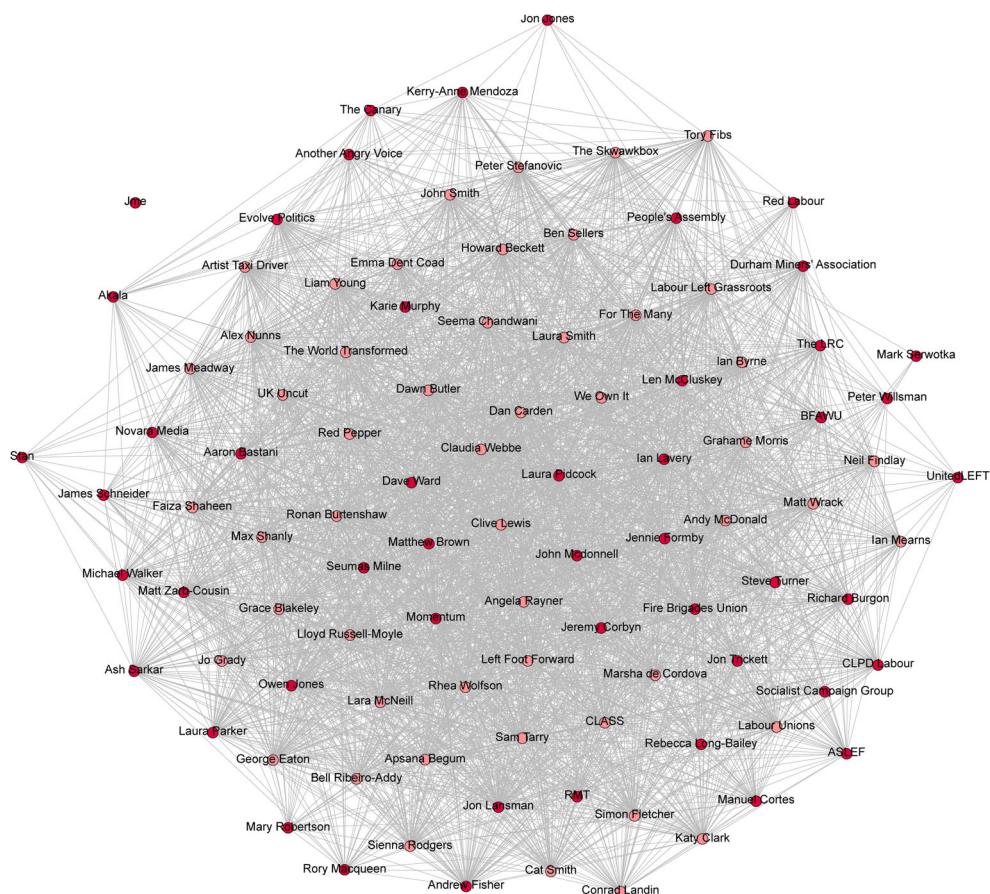
Figure 1: Visualisation of the Corbyn movement mutual follow network. Nodes: 100 (49/51), Edges: 7,065, Density: 0.714, Mutuals Density: 0.599.

which is to say that it is around 71 per cent complete. Considering only mutual ties within the network reduces the graph density to 0.599 (reflecting the fact that many of the follows in the network are not reciprocated). By any measure, this is an extremely dense network and it is also notable that while it is possible to interpret qualitatively the position of nodes at the periphery—with traditional labour movement actors more concentrated to the right in Figure 1, and activist and media outriders more to the left—the network doesn't break down into consistent clusters or communities. In contrast to the Remain movement, the Corbyn movement contains a number of non-professional activists and non-professional activist organisations (seventeen in total), six accounts that are best described as pro-Corbyn

political factions, and only one journalist employed by a mainstream media organisation, as previously defined (Owen Jones). The most followed user in this network is, unsurprisingly, Jeremy Corbyn, who was followed by ninety-six of the users (which in the case of this network of 100 users is also a percentage). The next most followed accounts are John McDonnell and Clive Lewis (ninety-three), followed by the former Labour Party General Secretary, Jennie Formby. Ian Lavery and Richard Burgon were followed by ninety-two, and Laura Pidcock, Rebecca Long-Bailey, Angela Rayner and Momentum by ninety-one.

Figure 2 is the equivalent network visualisation and statistics for the Remain movement. This is a larger network, comprising 153 users (sixty-seven identified from the literature
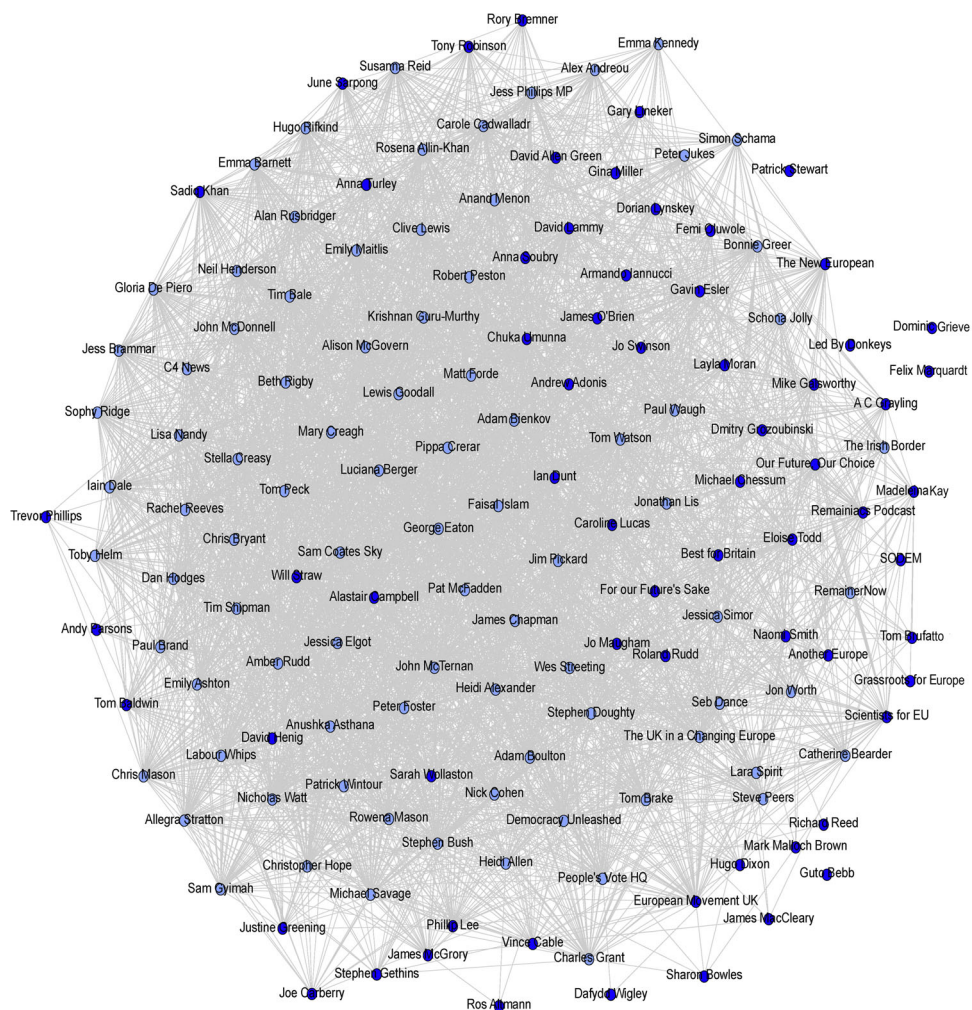
Figure 2: Visualisation of the Remain movement mutual follow network. Nodes: 153 (67/86), Edges: 11,087, Density: 0.459, Mutuals Density: 0.303.

review and the additional eighty-six users added as described previously). As with Figure 1, the initial set of movement actors are the darker nodes. The network is also very dense, although less so than the Corbyn movement. As a directed follow network (in which each users can be connected by up to two ties in the event that both follow each other), the overall density is 0.459. Again, the density reduces if analysed as an undirected network of mutual followers. In this case the network has a density of 0.303. This means that any given user is likely to be connected to around half of the network, either as a follower or followee, and will be a mutual follower of around

a third of the users (as with the Corbyn network the follows are skewed towards the more central users—hence the difference between the two measures of graph density).

The most followed user (and the most central figure in the mutual follows network) is the Channel 4 journalist Faisal Islam, who is followed by 114 (74 per cent) of the other users. The next most followed users are the former MP and the one time leading light of Change UK, Chuka Umunna (110), and the former Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, Tom Watson (109). Overall, one very striking feature of the Remain movement is the presence of 'legacy' media journalists, particularly at the core

Table 2: Comparison of means

	N	Followers	MSM Gatekeeper Followers	Weighted Reach
Corbyn	100	96,753	5.31	13.63
C1	49	142,803	5.65	15.32
C2	51	52,508	4.98	11.99
Remain	153	229,049	14.36	38.36
R1	67	301,797	8.33	21.39
R2	86	171,707	19.11	51.75

Note: A notable divergence we see here is in the relative following of the second set of users in each movement (C2 and R2). In the case of the Corbyn movement, the first set of users have a slightly higher number of MSM gatekeepers as followers, but in the case of Remain there is a very striking increase from R1 to R2.
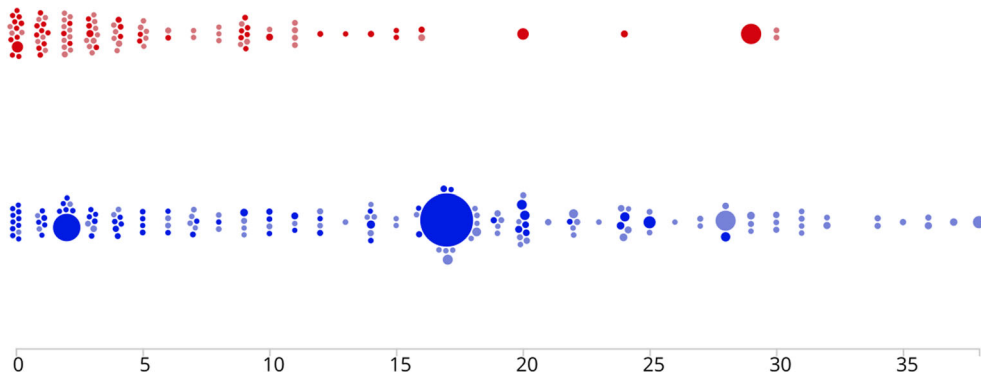

Figure 3: Beeswarm plots visualising the Twitter following and MSM gatekeeper following of each set of Twitter accounts.

of the network. In total, there are forty-two journalists among the 152 accounts who make up the network, suggesting already a very different character to that of the Corbyn movement. In contrast to Corbynism, the Remain movement at its peak contains MPs from all the political parties represented in Parliament, excluding the Northern Irish parties. Those whose primary public-facing role can be categorised as a campaigner are all professionally employed in this capacity. The network also contains a handful of PR professionals, business leaders and lawyers. These traits are all in stark contrast to the character of the Corbyn movement.

The mean average for the three measures of communicative reach for each movement are displayed in Table 2. The first and fourth rows show the average figures for each movement. These are then broken down into the initial core users, added on the basis of the literature review (C1 and R1), and those added on the basis of their number of incoming and outgoing network ties (C2 and R2). The headline finding here is that the Remain movement has a much higher level of MSM gatekeeper following than the Corbyn movement. On average, each actor in the Corbyn movement on Twitter is followed by five to six MSM gatekeepers, while actors in the Remain movement are followed by fourteen to fifteen. These proportions are broadly similar if the audience reach of the gatekeepers' outlets are considered (that is, weighted reach).

Figure 3 visualises the data summarised as mean averages in the first four columns of Table 2 (that is, excluding the weighted reach) for each individual account as a 'beeswarm' plot. The Corbyn movement is to the top of the chart, and the Remain movement the bottom. Each point here represents a Twitter account in our data. Their position on the X axis indicates the number of MSM gatekeepers which follow the account. The relative size of

each point illustrates the size of the user's Twitter following (the two large points in the Remain 'swarm' are Gary Lineker and Patrick Stewart, and the two largest in the Corbyn movement are Jeremy Corbyn and Owen Jones). As with the network diagrams, the initial set of core actors are in the darker shade.

This visualisation shows clearly the extent to which Remain attracted more attention from MSM gatekeepers than the Corbyn movement. Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonnell and Owen Jones each had significant followings among gatekeepers (the three relatively large darker points furthest to the right of the top line on the X axis), but the movement as a whole is much more concentrated at the lower end. Remain, meanwhile, has a number of users with much higher gatekeeper followings than even these three very prominent figures, among them George Eaton who is also the most followed member of the Corbyn movement. The difference in following between the two movements, as the case of George Eaton suggests, is largely down to the extent to which Remain integrated MSM journalists, who are in turn highly followed by MSM gatekeepers.

Conclusion

Without doubt, contemporary politics in Britain (and beyond) has been deeply shaped by these two movements, even if neither were ultimately successful in their goals. While the Remain movement failed to prevent Britain's departure from the EU, it found considerable success in shaping elite political discourse and in framing an election in which Corbynism oversaw one of Labour's worst results in the party's long history, after which the latter movement lost control of the party machinery. Given the political significance of these movements, and the extent to which Twitter is, as already mentioned, an important tool in the modern political reporter's arsenal, one would expect to find both attracting considerable attention from media gatekeepers. However, our research shows that, at least on Twitter, the Remain movement received far more attention from MSM gatekeepers than Corbynism.

What explains this finding? We can only speculate about causality and intention with the limited data we have, but the key difference appears to be the number of legacy media journalists integrated into the Remain movement. Homophily, that 'birds of a feather flock together', is a common finding within social network analysis, including in online networks. This applies here not only for our two movements (which is to be expected), but also of MSM actors. Recent scholarship shows that journalists form very insular online networks.[14] Our findings confirm this. This implies that any movement that successfully integrates MSM actors (who are drawn from a very narrow social group), can expect greater attention from MSM gatekeepers. That the Remain movement was more successful in doing so is indicative of the contrasting social character of the movements. While the Remain movement was sociologically both more elite and politically more aligned with the status quo, the Corbyn movement contained actors, including new media organisations, that are typically found outside the purview of parliamentary politics.

A number of other questions might be posed in light of these findings: to what extent does the disparity between the two movements found here reflect distinct communicative strategies or resources? Can it be said to reflect the political instincts and preferences of MSM gatekeepers? And/or what role did exogenous political circumstances play? A satisfactory answer—one which is beyond the scope of this article—will have to consider both the efforts to report and the efforts to communicate. What we have sought to highlight, however, is the extent to which a movement's social media networks matter in this regard. In examining this question, we have also sought to demonstrate a method for identifying and visualising social movement actors online, and to measure their potential MSM reach.

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[14] K. Fincham, 'Exploring political journalism homophily on Twitter: a comparative analysis of US and UK elections in 2016 and 2017', *Media and Communication*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2019, pp. 213–24; F. Hanusch and D. Nölleke, 'Journalistic homophily on social media: exploring journalists' interactions with each other on Twitter', *Digital Journalism*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2019, pp. 22–44; N. Usher and Y. M. M. Ng, 'Sharing knowledge and "microbubbles": epistemic communities and insularity in US political journalism', *Social Media and Society*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2020.

Finally, we might also ask to what extent the media opportunity structure that we have revealed in this study is an explanatory factor in a movement's communicative strategy. While a populist approach to communications has been criticised by some commentators as a reflection of a political paranoia, our findings illustrate the extent to which the Corbyn movement's anti-establishment discourse has a sociological validity.[15] Compared to a contemporary, and to some extent, a rival movement, Corbynism was indeed relatively isolated from the gatekeepers of the mainstream media on Twitter.

Note: The top line is the Corbyn movement, the lower line is Remain. The darker points are the initial users, their position on the X axis indicates the number of MSM gatekeepers that follows them and the relative size of each point illustrates the size of the user's Twitter following.

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[15]See, for example, J. Watts and T. Bale, 'Populism as an intra-party phenomenon: the British Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2019, pp. 99–115.