

*** Call for extended abstracts for edited collection - Please circulate widely ***

**Social Media, Politics and the State:
Protests, Revolutions, Riots, Crime and Policing in the Age of Facebook, Twitter and
YouTube.**

Edited by Daniel Trottier and Christian Fuchs

“Social media” is a new buzzword, marketing ideology and sphere of imagination in which contemporary techno-optimistic and techno-pessimistic visions are played out. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have made a considerable impact on contemporary life. A growing corpus of research considers how these platforms have affected marketing, identity construction, social coordination and privacy. The scholarship that this collected volume addresses looks at how state power and politics are both contested and exercised on social media.

Because social media are saturated in contemporary life, they have become a tool and a terrain for conflicts between states and a multitude of organized and autonomous actors. Social media are celebrated for “levelling the playing field” by empowering otherwise powerless actors. The ‘Green Movement’ during the 2009 elections in Iran was globally broadcast on Twitter. Marginalized political groups can now promote their agenda on free and easy-to-use platforms. Even rioters and other actors breaking the law can organize and discuss their exploits on these platforms. Yet in practice, social media often lead to asymmetrical power relations, as a result of asymmetrical relations of online visibility.

Studying social media politics, there are on the one hand techno-optimistic approaches that claim that social media helps to revive democracy (examples of such talk include the focus on “Twitter revolutions”, “YouTube democracy”, or a “Twitter public sphere”) and on the other hand techno-pessimistic approaches that claim that social media are a new threat to democracy (examples of such talk include focus on the omnipresence of criminal threats, harassments, terrorism and violent extremism on social media, the talk about “Twitter and Blackberry riots”, the stress on the end of political activism due to the lack of real-life contacts between activists and citizens, the focus on how the police and repressive regimes monitor social media in order to repress political activism, etc). The focus of this collected volume is different in that it seeks contributions that give a realistic assessment of the relationship between various forms of collective action (e.g. the Arab spring, the Occupy movement, contemporary student protests, contemporary social movements in Greece, Spain, and other countries, Anonymous, WikiLeaks, various forms of terrorism, various forms of crime, various forms of political activism, etc) and state power (the police, various political regimes, intelligence, the state-industrial surveillance complex, the neoliberal regime of governance, etc) on social media.

In the Iranian protests in 2009 just like in the Arab spring, activists have used social media as organizing and communication tool in their protests and governments have tried to censor and monitor social media, often with the help of surveillance technologies produced and exported by Western companies. WikiLeaks has tried to make the power of state actors transparent with the assistance of online leaking, and political opponents of the project have answered with boycotts and large-scale campaigns. Anonymous has advanced a networked form of political hacktivism and is facing the criminalization of distributed denial of service attacks and politically motivated cracking as well as prosecution of some of its activists. Organizations concerned about police brutality, including discriminatory and racist practices have turned to social media in order to 'watch the watchers' (regional CopWatch branches on Facebook, leaking personal data about abusive police officers to the public, drone and citizen journalism of police activities during political protests). However, these very sites render political activists visible to the police, and the police have developed an interest in monitoring social media and using them as surveillance tools. Social media and mobile phones have been used as communication tools in the London and Vancouver riots in 2011, to which the police answered with an offensive of policing social media, developing new social media surveillance tools, and publicly declaring the need for laws and technologies that enable the control of riots, crime and terror. Since the start of the global economic crisis in 2008, Europe has experienced an electoral shift towards the right in many countries and a growth of right-wing extremism and fascist activism that has culminated in Anders Breiviks' mass killing of 69 people. The public and the police have since asked if Internet- and social media-monitoring and control can prevent such massacres, by detecting early warning signals and help catch criminals and terrorists before they attack. Privacy and civil society activists are the same time concerned that social media policing and surveillance bring about a totalitarian society, in which innocent citizens are criminalized and discriminated against, and in which social media policing turns against civil society, minorities (especially people of colour) and political activists, that conservative law and order politics are advanced, and that a techno-deterministic ideology emerges that overlooks the societal causes of crime and terror and believes in a technological fix to societal problems that are rooted in modern society's power structures.

We are explicitly neither interested in contributions that tell readers which great opportunities or threats various forms of collective action on social media pose, nor in contributions that focus on opportunities or threats posed by various forms of state action on social media. We are rather exclusively interested in contributions that address how collective action and state power are related and conflict as two-sides of social media power, and how power and counter-power are distributed in this relationship.

We are compiling a collection of research papers that address one or more of the following issues:

- Social media and the Arab Spring, and related regime conflicts

- Social media and the Occupy movement
- Social media and student protests / austerity protests
- Social media and riots / social unrest in urban areas
- Social media and political protests and activism
- Social media and marginal political groups
- Social media, right-wing extremism, and fascism
- Social media and religious violence
- Social media and organized crime
- Social media and policing
- Social media and police violence
- Social media and the state-industrial surveillance complex
- Social media and Anonymous
- Social media and WikiLeaks

In particular, we invite research that considers a) the two-sided nature of power in relation to social media and politics, and that is b) theoretically focused, c) critical in nature and d) empirically rigorous.

- All chapters should give attention to theoretical question that address what political power is all about in general and today and how this relates to social media: What is the state? What is power? What is politics? What is the police? What is surveillance? What is activism? What is civil society? How does the relationship between collective action and state power look like in modern society?
- Which critical theories that conceptualize these phenomena are there? Which of these theories are feasible in the context of social media?
- How can the relationship of collective action and state power be theorized and how does this relate to social media?
- What does it mean to study social media, politics and the state critically?
- How should the concepts of power and counter-power be theorized? How can such a theorization be applied to social media?
- How can the power relations and asymmetries between collective actors and state apparatuses be conceptualized, theorized, and empirically studied in a realistic and dialectical way?

Final versions of chapters should be no longer than 8000 words, including references and notes. We intend to submit a full proposal to Routledge, who have expressed an interest in this collection.

We are currently seeking extended abstracts of 800-1200 words. Please send extended abstracts, along with a brief bio to daniel.trottier@im.uu.se no later than **Monday, October 15th, 2012**.

Tentative schedule:

Extended abstracts due: Monday, October 15th, 2012

Notification of accepted papers: Thursday, November 1st, 2012

First draft of chapters due: Monday, April 1st, 2013
Feedback on chapters returned: Monday, June 3rd, 2013
Final versions of chapters due: Monday, July 15th, 2013

In order to be considered, abstracts should adhere to the following style (800-1200 words in total, please address each aspect separately and include the specific headlines in your abstract):

- a) Contribution Title
- b) Full name of the author(s)
- c) Institutional affiliation(s)
- d) Postal address(es)
- e) e-mail address(es)
- f) Telephone number of the corresponding author

Structured Abstract

1) Purpose:

What are the overall task and research question the chapter addresses?

2) Scope:

What is the scope of the analysis (time period for the analysis, geographical scope, which phenomena are included in the analysis, which one excluded and why, which spheres of society and their interrelations are taken into account (politics, state, economy, ideology, etc))?

3) Method:

Which theoretical approaches and empirical research methods are employed for answering the research questions and attaining the chapter's task? How does the chapter employ and apply critical social theories for studying social media, politics, the state, power and counter-power? How is the power relationship of collective actors and state power taken into account?

4) Results:

What are the main results presented in the paper?

5) Recommendations:

What are the main recommendations for society that the research allows to draw from a critical and ethical perspective?

6) Conclusions:

What are the main conclusions of the conducted research for politics, society, academia, the research field of Critical Internet and Social Media Studies, and the public?