

Social media research and policing: academic perspectives

Jeremy Crump

Senior Visiting Research Fellow

Leeds University Business School

Outline

- The existing agenda
- 3 current areas of study
 - Big data and quantitative data
 - Networks, style and impact
 - Organisational culture
- Future research topics

The current agenda



From our analysis result the following categories that describe best practice in police social media adaptation:

- » Social Media as a Source of Criminal Information
- » Having a Voice in Social Media
- » Social Media to Push Information
- » Social Media to Leverage the Wisdom of the Crowd
- » Social Media to Interact with the Public
- » Social Media for Community Policing
- » Social Media to Show the Human Side of Policing
- » Social Media to Support Police IT Infrastructure
- » Social Media for Efficient Policing

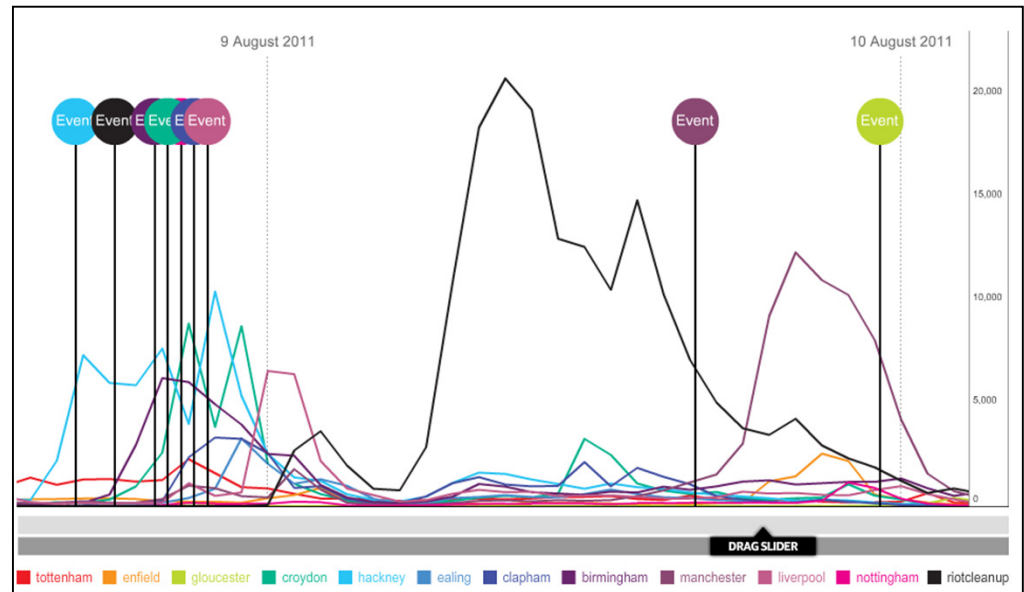
Reading the Riots

Investigating England's summer of disorder

theguardian

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BRITISH POLICE ARE THIRD HIGHEST USERS OF FACEBOOK DATA GLOBALLY

Today Facebook has [published its first transparency report](#), detailing law enforcement and national security requests from countries around the world. Britain requested data on 1,975 occasions, covering 2,337 users. In 32% of cases, Facebook declined to provide any data.



Thanks to the transparency reports of Google, Microsoft, Facebook and Twitter we continue to learn more about the scale of law enforcement being able to access information held by internet companies. Contrary to the claims by various politicians that the internet is a wild west, we know that Britain receives [more data than any other country](#) about Skype users, and Facebook's data shows that the UK is the third highest user of Facebook data in the world, after the US and India.

In his introduction to the data, Colin Stretch, Facebook General Counsel says that *"We strongly encourage all governments to provide greater transparency about their efforts aimed at keeping the public safe, and we will continue to be aggressive advocates for greater disclosure."*

He is absolutely right. It is absurd that we learn more about Government surveillance from Microsoft, Google and Facebook than our own authorities. These figures were never mentioned during the Parliamentary debate on the draft communications data bill, nor in the annual report of the Interception of Communications Commissioner's report.

SEARCH

SEARCH

https://www.facebook.com/about/government_requests

“A balance between
security and privacy
online must be
struck...”

#INTELLIGENCE

Sir David Omand
Jamie Bartlett
Carl Miller

DEMOS

3 areas of current study

- Big data
- Networks, style and impact
- Organisational culture

Big data

We never, ever in the history of mankind have had access to so much information so quickly and so easily

Vint Cerf



Big data

- 1) Bigger Data are Not Always Better Data
- 2) Not All Data are Created Equal
- 3) What and Why are Different Questions
- 4) Be Careful of Your Interpretations
- 5) Just Because It is Accessible Doesn't Mean Using It is Ethical

Source: danah boyd (2010) <http://www.danah.org/papers/talks/2010/WWW2010.html>



COSMOS COLLABORATIVE ONLINE SOCIAL MEDIA OBSERVATORY

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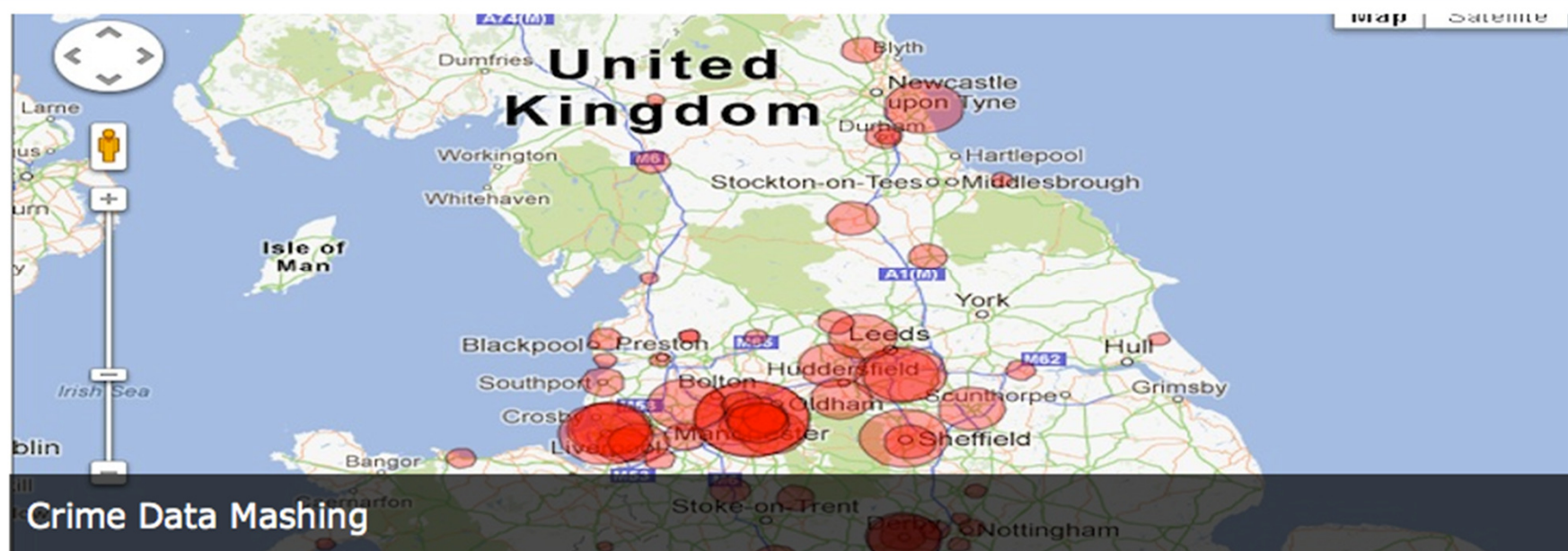
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About Us

The Collaborative Online Social Media Observatory (COSMOS) is an



Research

Big Social Data, generated in large part by Social Media interactions, are



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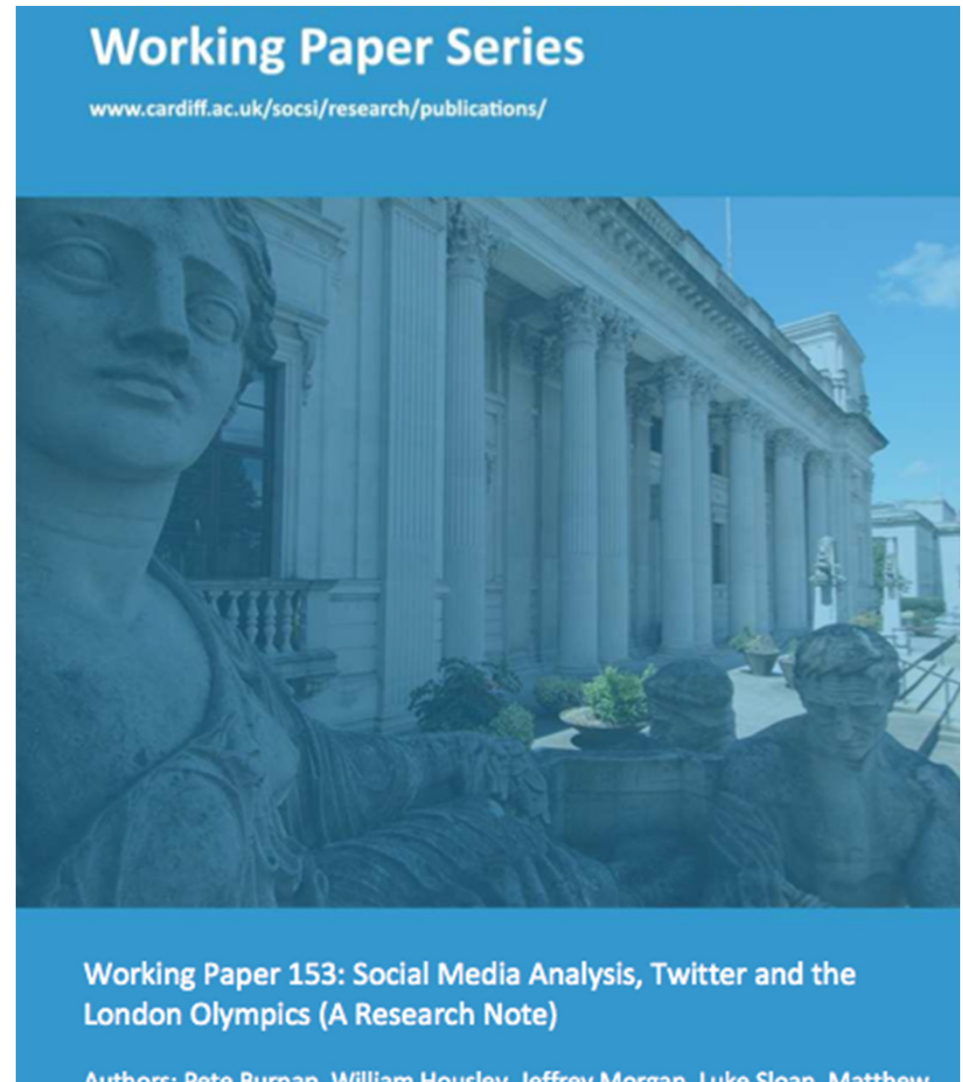


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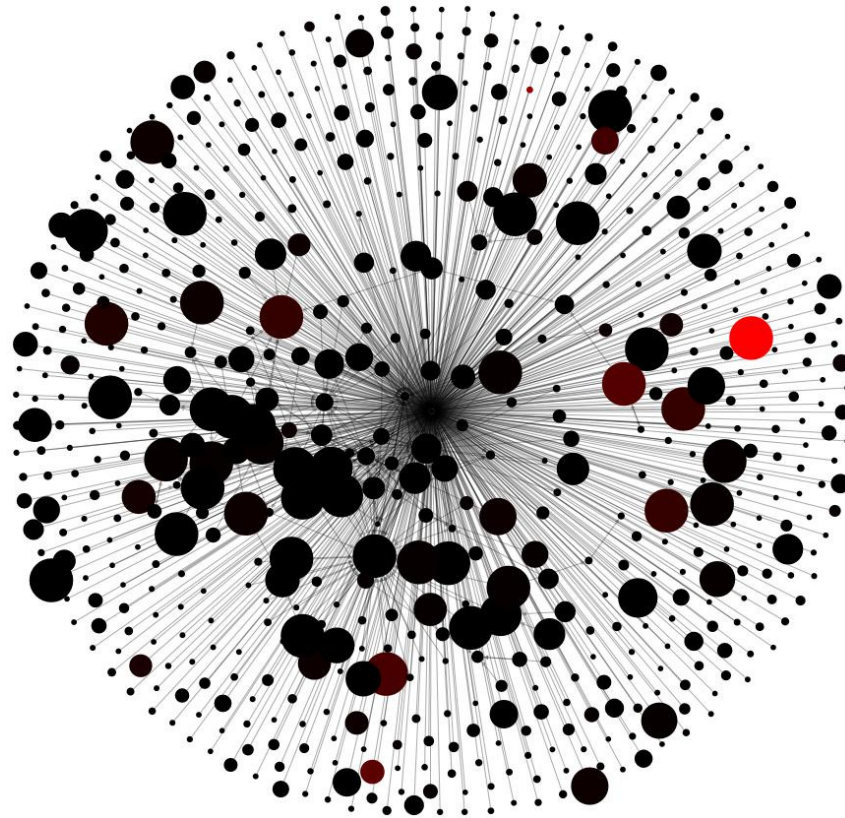
Big data

- Handling material in bulk
- Lack of metadata (location, individual identity etc)
- Rumour v intelligence (but this is not unique to social media)
- the reciprocity between online expression and offline action is still largely not understood

Source: Cardiff Working Paper 153: Social Media Analysis, Twitter and the London Olympics (A Research Note) Pete Burnap, William Housley, Jeffrey Morgan, Luke Sloan, Matthew Williams, Nick Avis, Adam Edwards, Omer Rana and Malcolm Williams

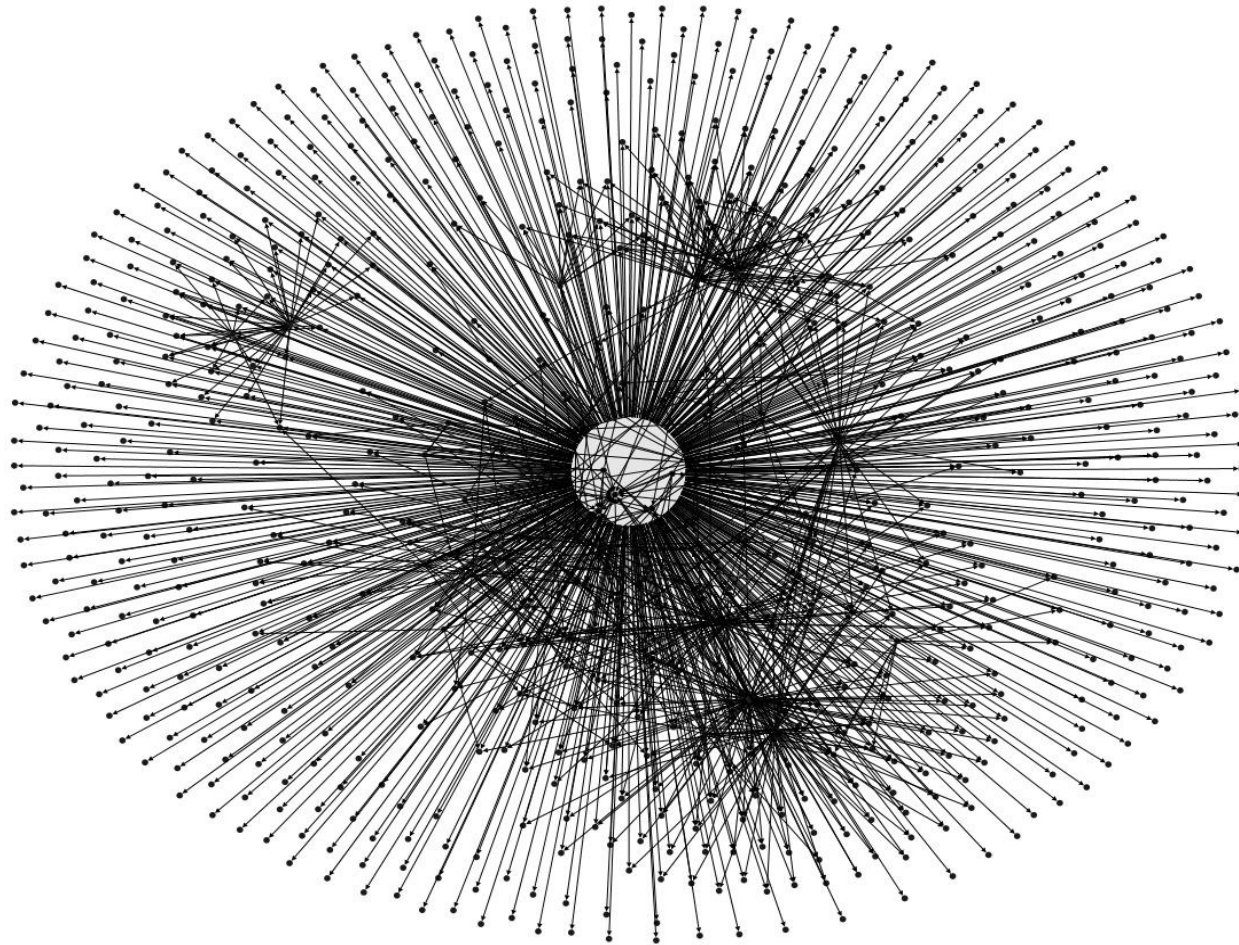


Networks, style and impact

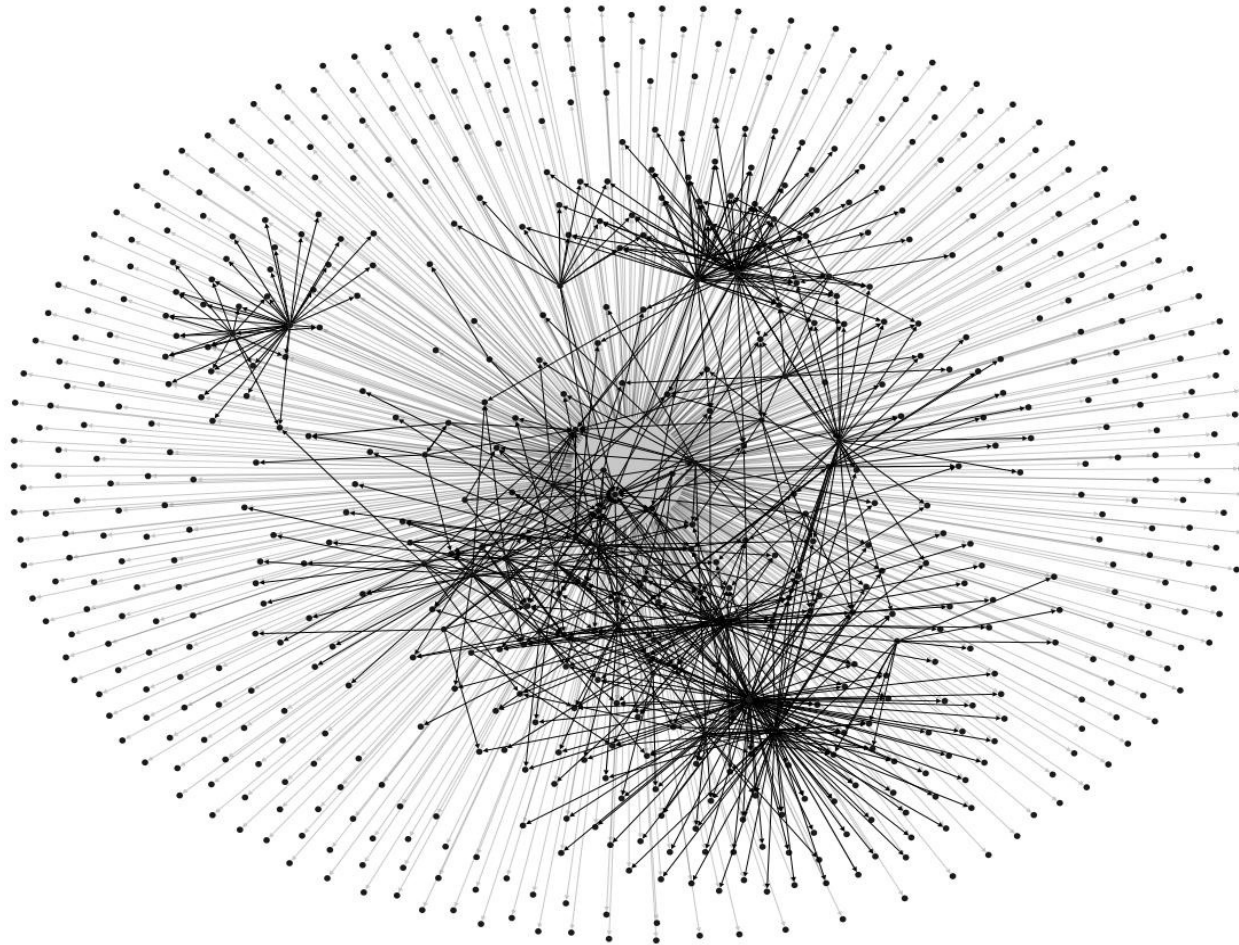


- Size=followers
- Colour=tweets

graphs:@policingstoke – followers, degree1.5



graphs:@policingstoke – followers, degree1.5,indgree>1



Social Media and the Police—Tweeting Practices of British Police Forces during the August 2011 Riots

Sebastian Deneff
Fraunhofer FIT
Schloss Birlinghoven
53754 Sankt Augustin
Germany
sebastian.deneff@fit.fraunhofer.de

Petra S. Bayerl
Erasmus University Rotterdam – RSM
Burgemeester Oudlaan 50
3062 PA Rotterdam
The Netherlands
pbayerl@composite.rsm.nl

Nico Kaptein
COT
Koninginnegracht 26
2514 AB Den Haag
The Netherlands
n.kaptein@cot.nl

ABSTRACT

With this paper we take a first step to understand the appropriation of social media by the police. For this purpose we analyzed the Twitter communication by the London Metropolitan Police (MET) and the Greater Manchester Police (GMP) during the riots in August 2011. The systematic comparison of tweets demonstrates that the two forces developed very different practices for using Twitter. While MET followed an *instrumental approach* in their communication, in which the police aimed to remain in a controlled position and keep a distance to the general public, GMP developed an *expressive approach*, in which the police actively decreased the distance to the citizens. In workshops and interviews, we asked the police officers about their perspectives, which confirmed the identified practices. Our study discusses benefits and risks of the two approaches and the potential impact of social media on the evolution of the role of police in society.

Author Keywords

Police; Twitter; UK Riots; Crisis Communication; Microblogging

ACM Classification Keywords

H.5.3 Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI): Group and Organization Interfaces – Collaborative computing, Computer-supported cooperative work

General Terms

Human Factors

INTRODUCTION

On Thursday August 4th, 2011, at about 6:15 PM, Mark Duggan, 29, was shot dead by the police in Tottenham in the Greater London area, during an operation aimed to arrest him. Questions about whether or not Duggan shot first and whether this was an act of self-defense started a debate that put the police operation into question. On

Saturday evening, August 6th, a crowd of about 300 people gathered at a police station. What started as a peaceful demonstration, turned into a forceful riot that spread in the following days across neighborhoods and to other cities such as Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester. Buildings were set on fire and stores were looted. Thousands of people were arrested. Five people died and over 200 people injured; 186 of them police officers [2]. In London alone, 3,443 riot-related crimes were reported [25] which caused damages of over 200 million pounds [18]. During the riots, social media became a contentious topic of public debate, as offenders used different networks and mobile communication services to organize themselves—even leading to a discussion on governmental orders to shut off Twitter [14].

Yet, the UK riots also saw the entry of other users into the social media space. UK police forces likewise used Twitter extensively, in this case as an outreach channel to communicate with the public. During the riots, British police forces not only saw a tremendous growth in the number of Twitter followers. They also, for the first time, engaged with the public on such a large scale via social media, using Twitter as the main platform.

Twitter, as a microblogging system, allows its members to post messages (so-called ‘tweets’) of up to 140 characters. These tweets are displayed on a member’s page as a running stream of messages. Members can choose to follow others. Messages of people they follow are then displayed on their own Twitter page. Tweets usually are posted publicly, giving anybody the chance to access them, regardless of whether they are Twitter members or follow each other. As members can also directly react to tweets of others, Twitter becomes an interactive space of open communication. Given that effective communication is vital in containing and controlling crisis situations, Twitter with its free availability, possibility for dynamic and fast-paced dissemination and unrestricted reach seems imminently well suited for this task.

The appropriation of Twitter, and social media more generally, is, however, not straightforward for the police—not only due to extensive legal frameworks that bind police

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Organisational culture

New knowledge regimes are met with resistance, not only because of the stubbornness of police occupational culture, but also because they threaten what is perceived as meaningful professional practice

H. I. Gundhus (2013). 'Experience or Knowledge? Perspectives on New Knowledge Regimes and Control of Police Professionalism'. *Policing* 7(2)

Organisational culture



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Toward a Complex Adaptive Intelligence Community


The Wiki and the Blog

[D. Calvin Andrus](#)

US policymakers, war-fighters, and law-enforcers now operate in a real-time, worldwide decision and implementation environment. Information about a new development in Baghdad is known in Washington within minutes. Decisions about a response are made in Washington within minutes. These decisions are implemented in Baghdad within minutes. The total "intelligence-decision-implementation" cycle time can be as short as 15 minutes. While this is an extreme example, it highlights the tremendous compression of the response time required by all involved compared to previous generations. This severe compression not only affects the highest priority issues, but also ripples back into the most routine intelligence, decision, and implementation processes.

"We must transform the IC into a community that dynamically reinvents itself . . . as the national security environment changes."

It does so for good reason. The compressed response cycle gives the United States significant strategic and tactical superiority over our adversaries. Our national security is best protected when we operate more quickly than those who would do harm to our people and our freedom. This compressed response time allows us to disrupt, interdict, preempt, and respond to injurious efforts before our adversaries can achieve their goals against us.



View the movie [Extraordinary Fidelity](#), the story of CIA officers John T. Downey and Richard G. Fecteau who spent decades in a Chinese prison, in our [Video Center](#).

POLKA - Online Collaboration

POLKA (the Police OnLine Knowledge Area) is a secure online collaboration tool for the policing community to network, ask questions, share insights, discuss ideas and suggest new ways of working.

You can join POLKA if you have access to the Police National Network (PNN) or if you are on selected GSi (Government Secure intranet) networks.

Communities on POLKA

There are over 250 communities on POLKA, all managed and moderated by specialist practitioners. These include:

- Knowledge Bank
- Police Gazette
- Uniformed Operational Support - Public Order
- Uniformed Operational Support - Firearms
- Criminal Intelligence Analysis
- Service Delivery and Business Transformation
- ACPO Police Dogs
- Penalty Notice Processing
- Custody
- Police Driver Training

Web Links

- [POLKA homepage](#)

Related Words

polka, police online knowledge area, policepolka, online communities, collaboration,

Downloads

- [List of GSi organisations with access to POLKA](#)
- [List of POLKA communities](#)
- [POLKA Quick Start Guide](#)

Themes for further research

- Ethnographical studies of police social media behaviours
- Similar studies of social media users which begin to understand the effect of police interventions. How enthusiastic are followers of police sites, and how impactful are police interventions?
- Structural approaches to police networks: who is in them? How do they change over time, and how do they work?
- In particular, how do they work in times of stress, such as a major incident or a controversial issue?
- Ethics and privacy – including legitimacy, transparency and regulation.
- Studies of the impact of social media on police organisations