

A Twitter Analysis of an Integrated E-Activism Campaign: #FeesMustFall - A South African Case Study

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Abstract. The announcement by South African public universities that study fees will in 2017 be increased by 11.5% triggered the most widespread student riots since the apartheid years. The protests dubbed #FeesMustFall on Twitter began in 2015. This paper deals with tweets that were collected during the second wave of the campaign that played itself out during October–November 2016. The researcher purposefully sampled 300 tweets from citizen journalists and 150 tweets from professional journalists. Thematic analysis was manually conducted on the collected tweets. Codes were applied to the raw data as summary indicators for later analysis.

It was found that the citizen journalists who are not bound to the ethical constraints of a newsroom enjoyed a lot more freedom of expression than their counterparts in the official media. It is also not difficult for them to scoop the formal media with up-to-the minute tweets or to generate more metajournalism.

Keywords: E-democracy · Political engagement · E-activism · Citizen journalism · Professional journalism

1 Introduction

The announcement by South African public universities that study fees will in 2017 be increased by 11.5% triggered the most widespread student riots since the apartheid years which ended in 1994. The 2016 protests formed the second wave of such protests, the first wave taking place a year earlier in October 2015.

Dludla [1] posted the following report in Times Live:

“Students barricaded the entrances at University of Cape Town (UCT) and refused to leave, while their peers at Johannesburg’s University of the Witwatersrand, where protests dubbed #FeesMustFall on Twitter began on Oct. 13, overturned vehicles driving into the campus, local media reported.”

The University of Witwatersrand, hereafter referred to as Wits responded with a news release by Linda Jarvis, CFO at Wits, in which she explains that “We are mindful of the current economic climate and the financial strain on students and families. In light of this and following extensive consultations with the SRC and other University structures, we have reduced the average tuition fee for 2016 from 11% to 10.5%, and

the upfront fee increase from 10% to 6%” She also announced that residence fees will rise by 9.4% and international student fees by 10.7% [2]. Although the protests were peaceful and unofficial, Wits nevertheless cancelled all lectures and academic activities for October 14 [2].

According to Kekana [3] the police was called in to deal with the riots on most campuses. She reported that “(t)he SRC [of Wits] has posted videos on its social media pages of police forcibly removing a small group of students from a university entrance they had blocked. Dlodla [1] reported that “Twenty-three UCT students were arrested, and police said they would face charges of disrupting the peace.” Kekana [3] quoted an SRC member, Shaera Kalla, who complained about the excessive force used by the police. At the time of the writing of this article, one year after the first wave of protests started, Kalla was recovering in hospital after being hit in the back by 13 rubber bullets fired by the police [4].

The protests quickly spread to other public universities. Dlodla [1] reported the following:

Police fired stun grenades to disperse protesters at Rhodes University in Grahamstown in the southeast. UCT and Rhodes University remain closed, while students at Fort Hare University in Eastern Cape also joined the protests. Stellenbosch University authorities obtained a court interdict to bar protests, as students gathered in groups on the campus east of Cape Town.

Dlodla [1] quoted Francis Petersen, UCT’s acting Vice-Chancellor who had the following to say: “The situation yesterday and today is very, very problematic for us. Some examinations could not take place and work was disrupted everywhere on campus.”

In response to the protests, Dr. Blade Nzimande, the Minister for Higher Education and Training and vice chancellors agreed on a 6% cap on fee increases [5]. This offer was rejected by protesting students who demanded a 0% fee increase [5].

The spiral of violence resumed on 20 September 2016 Nzimande announced that it would be left to the public universities to determine their own fee increases but that it was recommended that increases don’t exceed 8%. Gasa and Dougan [6] reported in *The Daily Maverick* that “(w)hen Nzimande announced that households earning below R600,000 per annum would be exempt from paying the 8% fee increment required by tertiary institutions, he also said government would subsidise the shortfall resulting from lack of funds.”

The announcement generated a negative response from most of the student bodies at public universities.

#FeesMustFall protesters immediately made their dissatisfaction known. Protesters shut down a number of the country’s universities by blocking entrances, disrupting lectures, burning facilities and clashing with private security companies and police. At one of the chaotic campaign’s lowest points, cleaner Celumusa Ntuli died after inhaling fumes from a fire extinguisher, released by protesting students inside a Wits University residence. Days later, footage of policemen firing rounds of rubber bullets at Rhodes University students went viral. Across the country, campuses burned and learning ground to a halt.

Gasa and Dougan [6]

The studies of thousands of students are funded by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (Nsfas). According to Saltmarsh [7] “(m)any have recently pointed out

that greater student debt isn't even of much economic benefit to the government, as it will have to absorb all unpaid debt." This is not the only financial loss that the taxpayer is burdened with. Tax money is also used to fund the rebuilding and reparations to university property that was destroyed during the campaign. This assumption is confirmed in the Business Day of 24 December 2016 in which a figure of R24 billion of outstanding debt is disclosed.

2 Literature Review

The advent of the Internet and the subsequent rise of the social media have dramatically impacted on many disciplines and activities. According to Sivitanides and Shah [8] "(t)he world is in the midst of a digital revolution. The new tools of social media have reinvented social activism." In 2012 the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project found that "the use of social media is becoming a feature of political and civic engagement for many Americans. Some 60% of American adults use either social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter to engage in some form of civil activism" [9]. This trend have caught on in South Africa where Facebook and Twitter campaigns have been launched as platforms of discourse in the case of high profile political and or polemical events and/or controversies. The Nkandla-debacle around the security upgrades at the president's personal homestead, the #RhodesMustFall campaign and the criminal case against the paralympian, Oscar Pistorius illustrate this finding.

Uldam and Vestergaard [10] postulate that "(c)ivic activism has always produced tension between citizens who promote new and challenging demands and the responses of official institutions that typically lag behind the arc of change. In many cases, official responses are not simply slow; they may be repressive."

Cammaerts [11] is of the opinion that a strong linkage exists between social media and the formation and functioning of activism campaigns. He advanced that "social media platforms and the communicative practices they enable can potentially become constitutive of the construction of collective identities and have become highly relevant in view of disseminating, communicating, recording, and archiving a variety of movement discourses and deeds" (Cammaerts [11]).

The role of the social media is, however, not restricted to the dissemination and documentation of information. It also serves as a coordinating trigger for physical action. In that respect Alkhoulja [12] emphasized that "dissidents need to mobilize protestors and push more people to streets in order to challenge the state's authority and alter the status quo. To this goal, Social Media served as a strategic effectual tool for activists." The Egyptian activist, Wael Ghonim is used by Giglio [13] as an example of an activist who implemented a page as a managerial as well as a motivational tool.

[Ghonim] "implored his Facebook fans to spread word of the protest to people on the ground, and he and other activists constantly coordinated efforts, combining online savvy with the street activism long practiced by the country's democracy movements. Ghonim seemed to view the page both as a kind of central command and a rallying point—getting people past 'the psychological barrier'"

Giglio [13]

Salter and Kay [14] related how students at the University of the West of England (UWE) in the UK undertook protests against the British government's cuts to educational funding in the higher education sector. "The occupation at UWE began on 22 November 2010 at 15:00 when a group of students took over the main cafe-bar area of the University. The initial motivation for the occupation was University management's decision to effectively demote up to 80 principal lecturers, readers and professors as part of an ongoing programme of cuts at the University [14] The authors explain that "Social media were utilised according to the specific capacities of each particular form. As the occupiers put it in the focus group, 'different things work differently—Facebook within UWE, encrypted email lists within the core occupation, Twitter between occupations, YouTube for wider society' " [14].

The protests didn't occur without conflict among the protesters. Salter and Kay [14] reported that "as one occupier, 'White', put it, there was a split between those more interested in 'process', and those more interested in 'protest'."

The protest patterns at UWE showed a remarkable resemblance with those in South Africa. According to Salter [15] it was also triggered by the government's intentions to raise fees "to subject education to the whimsical will of the 'market' - by charging young people £9000 (\$14000) per year to be educated." Demonstrations and occupations were published on Facebook and Twitter while video chat technologies and secure email lists were used to announce strategies [15]. Salter [15] mentioned that during these wildcat protests routes were spontaneously determined making it difficult for the law enforcement officials to intervene. This was in stark contrast with the UK tradition of analogue protests where the protests were coordinated with the police [15].

In Portugal a major case study in activism developed on March 12th, 2011 namely the "Geração à Rasca" protests. It was followed by a social movement, the March 12th Movement (M12M). Rosas [16] gave the following explanation of the two initiatives: "The first was that the massive protests that erupted in the country's major cities, and that enrolled more than 500,000 people from all ages, backgrounds and status, were not mobilized by unions, political parties, or traditional social movements, but by four young university graduates" [16]. He elaborated as follows:

these protests were not organized and coordinated through traditional offline organizations or grassroots movements, but through the Internet and some of its Web 2.0 technologies, in particular social media tools like Facebook and YouTube. How this could happen in a country where nonconventional politics were almost reserved to unions and to corporative interests was, indeed, puzzling, as it was puzzling why it happened in 2011 and not before.
[16]

Alkhoulja [12] warned that online activism does not necessarily translate to physical protests. Gladwell [17] underscored this aspect by postulating that "activism in the cyber space encourages what he calls 'slacktivism,' or superficial, minimal effort in support of causes which restrains physical onground activism."

This linkage between communication and active protests are illustrated and investigated in the "FeesMustFall campaign.

3 Methodology

The researcher decided to follow a qualitative approach for this study. Since literally thousands of tweets were posted during this lengthy campaign the researcher engaged in purposive sampling. In a purposive sample, you sample from a population with a particular purpose in mind. This technique is also known as purposeful sampling. According to Palinkas *et al.* “[p]urposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest [18].

The sample that the researcher construed also served as the first level of data analysis. Coyne [19] described this method as follows: “The full range and variation in a category rather than a variable is sought to guide the emerging theory. Thus the data control the further sampling and this means that data analysis and sampling are done concurrently. It is variation according to the emerging categories, rather than phenomenal variation or any other kind of variations described earlier.”

The researcher purposefully sampled 300 tweets from citizen journalists and 150 tweets from professional journalists during the second wave of the campaign that played itself out during October – November 2016. A professional journalist is, for the purpose of this study, an individual who earns an income from producing content from a media outlet. “Citizen journalism is defined by a number of attributes which make it distinct from professional journalism, including unpaid work, absence of professional training, and often unedited publication of content, and may feature plain language, distinct story selection and news judgment, especially hyper-local issues, free accessibility, and interactivity” [20].

Thematic analysis was manually conducted on the collected tweets. Namey et al. [21] summarised thematic analysis by saying that it goes further than just counting words or phrases by identifying and describing intrinsic latent and explicit salient ideas. Codes identified for ideas and themes are then applied to the raw data as summary indicators for later analysis.

4 Results of Twitter Analysis

4.1 Citizen Journalists

The citizen journalists who are not bound by the ethical constraints of a newsroom enjoyed a lot more freedom of expression than their counterparts who worked in the official media. It is also not difficult for them to scoop their more illustrious competitors in the newsrooms with up-to-the minute tweets. Goode [22] raised what he called “the most vexing question about the boundaries of citizen journalism” namely “whether we should restrict its definition to practices in which citizens act as content creators, producing original news material.” This question relates to other ways citizens express an opinion or make a contribution to the news environment e.g. by “rating, commenting, tagging and reposting,” all acts of contribution that is seen as “considerably less significant than ‘real’ citizen journalism” [22]. Goode [22] offered the following clarification: “if a user posts a comment on an existing news story but, in doing so,

brings to light new knowledge about that event or topic, then it is not clear that this contribution can be classified only as ‘metajournalism’” [22]. Features such as hashtags and retweeting help spread news and information faster than other media, whether in normal or crisis situations, and get people with shared interests closer to each other [23]. As such, a broad conception of citizen journalism appears warranted on the proviso that the important democratic function of bringing new knowledge into the public sphere is not downgraded as equivalent to secondary commentary” [22].

Scoops. The following examples illustrate how a scoop (publishing news first) can be achieved with micro news or mainstream news.

Students scream from their res at UKZN Westville @News24 [micro news]

#UKZN Westville a warzone again [mainstream news]

Night vigil is about to start. Mobilisation taking place in South Campus Auditorium [micro news].

Police are moving in, closer to Knockndo residence entrance, firing rubber bullets [micro news]

Situation tense #Wits students defying curfew, chanting outside residence. Police patrolling. Roads barricaded [macro news]

The #UKZN student services building is on fire [mainstream news].

Protesters use big umbrellas as a shields from the rubber bullets at #VUT #Fees2017 [mainstream news].

Personal Emotions. Tweets can also be used to convey personal emotions, something that a journalist can’t freely do. Respect, loathing, doubt, hate, and regret are depicted in the following tweets:

I respect TUT students such bravery!!!

So students pulled #FeesMustFall thru their asses in #Braamfontein Thugs, hooligans, arsonists, criminals. Lock them up without bail!

Our successful efforts in maintaining a non-violent #FeesMustFall campaign for 2 years has been compromised. Its time to reflect. #NMMU

#FeesMustFall. I hate the police man Ths is no lngr a protest, but its revolution. Lts fyt4 our Ryts #BlacklifeMatters.

Had the state responded last year to the #FeesMustFall movement, today we wouldn’t be saying rest in power, #BenjaminPhehla

Personal Characteristics. Tweets can be focused on personal characteristics.

@SAPoliceService are showing great restraint in the #FeesMustFall clashes. They are being attacked, having rocks and bottles hurled at them.

Macro Themes. Macro themes were at the order of the day. Leadership, poverty, parenting, blame, standards, counselling.

The absence of leadership on #FeesMustFall is a major concern.

There is no leadership. He is dancing in India. He can't explain to them why no #FeesMustFall since presidency so compromised.

(The tweet refers to President Zuma dancing during a state visit to India).

#FeesMustFall protest way too big for VCs or even @DrBladeNzimande. Where is the Prez & DP? The country is burning & no leadership! Shocking

It's though for me to argue against #FeesMustFall because I don't understand extreme poverty and the desperation that come with it.

30% pass has filled our varsities with utter morons. How is government to blame for varsity being expensive? #FeesMustFall? Please explain

(The tweet refers to the 30% pass standard set for matric)

"More than just a fight for free education, this is a fight for their future"

Zille blames SA's failed parenting for Fallists' behaviour around #FeesMustFall

My people, we all need counselling after these Wits cruel acts. I know we don't believe in it, but we need it.

Public Figures. The tweets identified the names of the major players that the tweeters felt should be held accountable and/or could provide a solution.

Apart from President Zuma, deputy-president Ramaphosa, the Minister of Higher Education, Dr. Blade Nzimande, and the previous leader of the opposition, Helen Zille, who also feature in the tweets cited *supra* more names of high profile individuals appear in the sample.

Moseneke, former deputy Chief Justice, says #FeesMustFall is legitimate!

Do students risk alienating previous supporters of the #FeesMustFall campaign? Was #AdamHabib's mistake trying to be a friend instead of VC?

Habib is the Vice-Chancellor of Witwatersrand University (Wits).

Celebrities who were not involved in the campaign were also mentioned in the tweets.

Tell me, didn't Oscar Pistorius get bail? Mcebo Dlamini denied bail? Why? The regime fears those who preach ideas even more than murderous!

Hillary Clinton just said there will be no tuition bill for families earning less than \$120k pa. We are still fighting for #FeesMustFall

Salute to Cassper for showing support for the #FeesMustFall movement in his performance!

#MTVMAMA2016

The tweet refers to Cassper Nyovest, a well-known South African rap artist.

Major Ideologies. Major ideologies were raised and even juxtaposed as can be seen in the following tweets:

So students want a communist solution for a personal capitalist outcome.

Zuma “#FeesMustFall a sign of a healthy democracy”, mxim. Protests are a sign of bad governance

Political or Polemic Issues. The Twitter handle has also been used to address other political and polemic issues that were not directly linked to the #FeesMustFall campaign. The Chief Parliamentary Whip of the ANC, Jackson Mtembu was cited in the following tweet that raised the eyebrows of members of the ruling party:

Jackson Mthembu says he called for NEC members to resign enmasse. Says the ANC under Zuma is worse than the apartheid government.

Mthembu never denied the content.

It was inevitable that the Nkandla issue would come up. The R246 million spent on security and installations and improvements to President Zuma’s private residence at Nkandla led to a prolonged series of investigations and a Constitutional Court Case.

S.A has had 22 years of democracy n yet they haven’t set structure’s 4free education but spend money on inkandla...mxm

Social media is responsible for what is happening in #Braamfontein right now.

Strategy. Our successful efforts in maintaining a non-violent #FeesMustFall campaign for 2 years has been compromised. Its time to reflect. #NMMU

Logic. Some of the tweets contained logical arguments.

Zuma “#FeesMustFall a sign of a healthy democracy”, mxim. Protests are a sign of bad governance

The government says you are the future leaders of this country yet they won’t invest in your education. The irony. #FeesMustFall

Remember FREE and QUALITY don’t get along. Free Education for all? C’mon SA let’s be realistic, we can’t afford that

60 Billion lost in Corruption annually while providing free education would only be 45 Billion mhh! we really have to strike

The leader of a Communist Party rubbishing a demand for free education? What kind of communists are these?

Philosophy.

“If only our pain bothered you as much as our protests” - Shaun King

Ethics. The ethical stance of some of the journalists was also queried.

Barry Bateman has long chosen sides when it comes to #FeesMustFall, he has long thrown objectivity as a journalist when it comes to it.

Bateman is a senior reporter at EWN.

Detail. Many of the Twitterati emphasized detail in their tweets. The following tweets illustrate this point.

The campaign focusing on FEE FREE, DECOLONISED & QUALITY EDUCATION! Not just FREE EDUCATION!

Condemnation. Students arrested must face a litany of charges & expelled for such foolish acts. Criminals belong in jail not university.

Arson is a serious crime though... We can't condone burning buildings. It is highly unacceptable

Convenient smoke screen for those "students" that know they won't pass their studies, so they go on the rampage and call it #feesmustfall

Support. The Twittersphere was flooded with support for the protesters.

Comrades solder on. We are with you.

Unexpected Themes. Unexpected themes that point to lateral thinking appear from time to time in tweets.

#FeesMustFall is a great initiative, not only will it benefit the students, but it will benefit the ones paying Lobola in a few years.

Lobola is a "bride price, traditionally one paid with cattle [24]. Nowadays, it is more often than not paid in cash.

Negative Responses. The tweets contained a fair amount of criticism levelled against the actions that were triggered by the campaign.

Burning buildings is not the answer

Misguided revolutionary behaviour doesn't reflect any desire to grow and learn at a place of higher learning.

Geographic Distribution of the Tweets. The geographic spread of the campaign to all public universities are reflected in the tweets.

Coordination. Chamber of Mines invites Wits #FeesMustFall leaders to a meeting <http://ift.tt/2e5XvbE> #feesmustfall #vulavula

Let's stand together as we #OccupyTreasury tomorrow. We leave Hatfield at 9 am from Prospect Str.

Rumours. Rumours thrive on social platforms. They are often strategically implemented. The following example illustrate the point:

Now they're saying lecturers could be retrenched because of #FeesMustFall. Now that's scary. Our best lecturers will leave the country.

Confusion. If its not silly unconstitutional curfews then it's trigger happy policeman & useless bouncers. Where the hell are we?

Jest. There was also no shortage of jest.

#ExcusesForBeingSingle I don't have time, I'm busy striking on #FeesMustFall

#FeesMustFall public leader #DlaminiDlamini, who demands university shutdown, wants to write a test tomorrow?

4.2 Professional Journalists

As mentioned *supra* the professional journalists are often scooped by citizen journalists. This does not only apply to text but also to video footage that is captured with private phones. This does, however, not mean that the professional journalists passively accept this phenomenon. They run Twitter accounts, both in their formal and private capacity, and compete aggressively for scoops in cyberspace.

Ritter [25] distinguishes between legacy and neoteric journalist. He found that:

Many legacy journalists often hold off on publishing information via social media for strategic reasons, contradicting any perception that social media is a live, continuously updating, complete categorization of news events. Legacy journalists interviewed here drew attention to the struggle they face when choosing to break a story via social media instead of using the traditional medium. There was a clear distinction of opinions between legacy and neoteric journalists. Neoteric journalists view social media as an extension of the traditional medium. Simply stated, it is a way to keep viewers, readers, and listeners updated in the interim.

The researcher captured tweets from a wide array of professional journalists from across the journalism spectre. Not all of work for the conventional media. Some of them are freelance journalists, others are in public relations or work for lobbying agencies. The media represented in the sample vary from mainstream television and radio stations, influential newspapers, university publications, as well as media monitoring houses.

Scoops. The following good news story was tweeted by a blogger:

UNISA management to contribute R10 million to support students who need funding.

The radio stations with their regular news bulletins and "breaking news stories" are better positioned to compete for scoops. Power FM tweeted the following reference to a story that dominated their news bulletins:

Protesting TUT students have attempted to set a police Nyala (armoured vehicle) on fire.

A court reporter from Business Day tweeted “Court releases eight Wits students arrested for public violence.” If s/he had to wait for the printed version to be finalized, the story would have lost its news value.

News24 tweeted when one of their journalists were hit by two rubber bullets at the Wits campus.

Journalist colleague hit with a rubber bullet. Lots of journos have started wearing helmets during ...

The tweet illustrates how close to the action the journalists venture to get the big story.

Promotion. As can be expected, professional journalists often use tweets to direct the attention of the Twitterati to their writings on higher order topics. Judith February and Patrick Bond, both columnists for the electronic newspaper, The Daily Maverick serve as examples:

My piece in the DAILY MAVERICK on #feesmustfall, the public discourse and the balancing of rights: www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2016-10-23-where-is-the-middle-ground-in-south-african-debate

#FeesMustFall demand reflects sound fiscal logic, not ‘ultra-leftism’

A new column by PATRICK BOND

Politicizing. Tweets are also used by the media to politicize an issue. A prominent anti-government Sunday paper tweeted the viewpoint of a radical newcomer to the parliamentary scene. Julius Malema is the leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters.

Malema says the EFF is 100% behind students, “they must never surrender or retreat.”

Comparison. Australian model: students get interest free loan and only pay back when employed and according to salary. Could it work in SA? #feesmustfall

Derick Watts, celebrity TV anchor of the investigative TV-program, Carte Blanche, explained the model in the tweet.

Analysis. Theuns Eloff is the Chairman of Higher Education South Africa. His tweet refers to an analysis on Fallism.

It read:

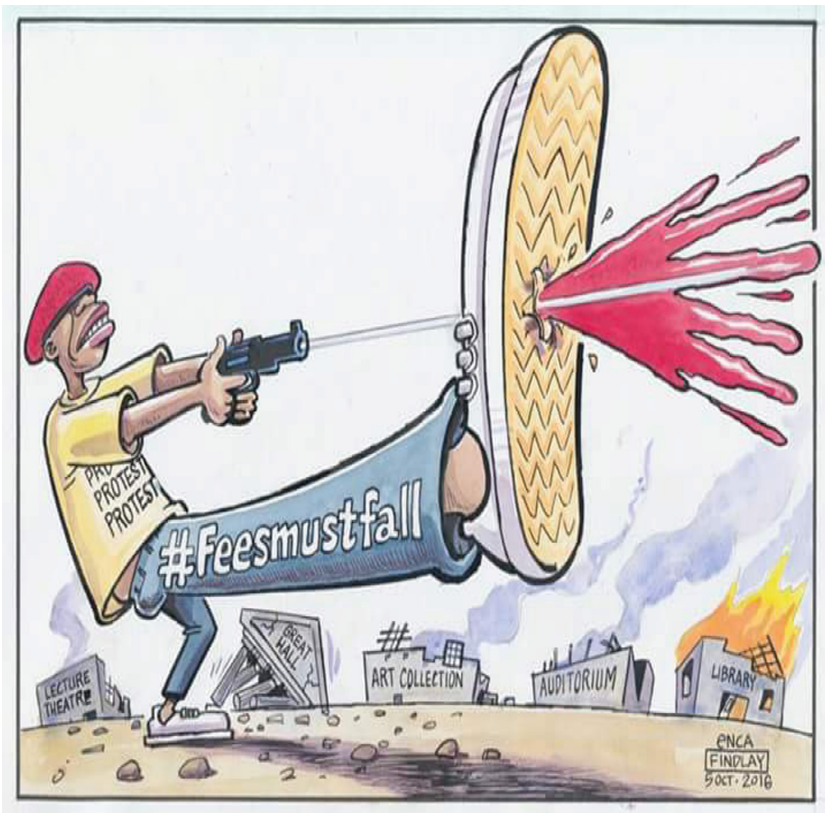
What lies behind Fallism? @politicsweb <http://www.politicsweb.co.za/opinion/what-lies-behind-fallism....> #FEESMUSTFALL IS MERELY THE EARS OF THE HIPPOPOTAMUS*

Medical advice. #FeesMustFall: Four tips to protect your eyes during a protest <http://bit.ly/2dhhdEL> by our @pontsho_pilane

Satire. A leading South African satirist, Evita Bezuidenhout, highlighted a comical dimension of the protests.

Why do our police who are in the service of the people appear on the Wits campus dressed like extras from a Star Wars film?

Cartoons added more satire and truth to the discourse. The following cartoon relates to the large scale destruction of university property by the protesters.



4.3 The Grey Area

There is however a grey area where professional journalists can tweet in their personal capacity.

The Twitter profile of one of the most influential journalists in the country, Adriaan Basson, reads:

“Netwerk24 editor-in-chief/hoofredakteur. Author of ‘Zuma Exposed’ (Jonathan Ball). Digital first.
Views are my own.”

During the storming of the parliament by more than a 1000 students during the campaign

Basson tweeted in his personal capacity that it is both a sad and historic day in South Africa’s educational history.

The tweet was in his mother tongue, Afrikaans.

4.4 Metajournalism

The tweet that generated the most metajournalism was not posted by a professional journalist but by a politician who occasionally produces editorial columns and comments. Dali Mpofu is a practicing senior advocate as well as the deputy leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters. His tweet read:\

Calling progressive lawyers willing to assist with #FeesMustFall matters in all affected university towns.

Volunteers pls contact me urgently.

Mpofu issues an appeal for volunteerism to all lawyers in or near universities to assist with legal advice to student protesters who have been/may be arrested during the protests. It generated 61 conversations, 1300 retweets, and 684 likes. This tweet illustrates the power as well as diversity of the Twitter platform.

Among the conventional media a journalist from the Mail and Guardian triggered the most metajournalism.

Pauli van Wyk generated 36 conversations, 201 retweets, and 112 likes. Two other interest groups, The Social Justice Movement and the Freemarket Foundation fared better.

The most metajournalism in the sample was generated by the following tweet:

A child of the ANC Arrested by the ANC Fighting for what the ANC promised Cry the beloved ANC.

The tweet plays on the iconic novel, Cry the beloved country that was written by Alan Paton. It triggered 51 conversations, 1700 retweets, and 827 likes. It was posted by a citizen journalist.

Another tweet from an unidentified citizen journalist rendered 897 retweets and got 315 likes. It compared one of the student activists with the Paralympian, Oscar Pistorius, who is doing jail time for the murder of his girlfriend. It read:

Tell me, didn’t Oscar Pistorius get bail? Mcebo Dlamini denied bail? Why?

The regime fears those who preach ideas even more than murderous!

5 Conclusion

It is clear from the findings that the Twittersphere is a major battleground where citizen journalists compete for scoops with professional journalists. Although the citizen journalists are not hampered by the ethical codes that restrict the professional

journalists, the professional journalists can tweet under their own names. This matter will in all probability in the near future be tested in the courts.

Analysing the tweets during and after selection creates the feeling that the researcher is viewing the transcriptions of thousands of mini-interviews. The content is often rich, and the participants diverse in their views. The myriad of themes that feature, many of them of an unexpected nature, underscores the high levels of creativity that are unleashed by a campaign of this nature. This researcher postulates that the more political and/or polemical the issue that is tweeted about, the wider the array of themes that it will propagate.

An analysis of the metajournalism indicated that the leading citizen journalists generated more conversations, likes, and retweets than their professional counterparts. This can probably be subscribed to the fact that the tweets also served an operational function and were not only posted to distribute news. The other important aspect is the vast amount of metajournalism that was generated by the interest groups. In future the interest groups may be classified and analyzed as a separate group.

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