Social media activism: An analysis of the #RhodesMustFall movement on Twitter (9 March 2015 – 9 April 2015)

Poloko Mokonehatse

212559630

Supervisor: Dr Sarah Gibson

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By

Poloko Mokonehatse

Student number: 212559630

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DECLARATION

I, Poloko Mokonehatse (212559630) declare that:

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ABSTRACT

Social media platforms have increasingly become associated with social movements globally. The platforms enables users to easily produce content, share information and interact with each other. Social media platforms have also provided users with a space that allows them to discuss common issues they would otherwise be unable to discuss due to constraints such as distance. This also provides users with the opportunity to discuss and engage in marginalized issues from a grassroot perspective. As several political parties also utilise social media platforms, users can directly interact with them about matters of concern. With the rise of social media activism, extensive research has been conducted from the global north with cases such as the Arab springs and the Egyptian uprising. In these examples, both protests had roots in issues of social justice and used Twitter to discuss these issues as well as the occurrences that happened during the protests.

While the above examples are from the global north, in 2015 South Africa experienced two considerable movements that were also largely influenced by Twitter. #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall initiated conversations that were key to national social justice issues. On one hand, #RhodesMustFall was based on the removal of the statue of Cecil Rhodes which led to a national conversation about the symbols of oppression around the country and later on discussions about race, transformation and memory. It has become apparent that a strong link has been established between social media platforms and various social movements. Interestingly, in the case of #RhodesMustFall, most of the research has focused on the issues of statues and symbols. This research aims to explore the relationship between social movement and networked public spheres. It will also focus on the aspects of social media that enable users to participate in social movements. The data will be collected under the #RhodesMustFall hashtag on Twitter during the period of 9 March 2015 – 9 April 2015. Although, a great amount of research on social media activism has used qualitative methods to understand the high volume of activities that happen online during the protests, this research will be using qualitative methods. In order to gain a deep understanding of the issues discussed on Twitter, the research will utilise the methods of critical discourse analysis to analyse the tweets and a semiotic analysis to analyse the digital images and memes that were posted online during the protests.

Keywords: Participatory culture, Network society, public sphere, #RhodesMustFall

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVATIONS

ANC (African National Congress)

ICT (Information and Communication Technologies)

IP (Internet Protocol)

EFF (Economic Freedom Fighters)

TCP (Transmission Control Protocol)

UCT (University of Cape Town)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This section aims to introduce the background of social media activism and explain the terms that will be used in this study. It will also introduce Twitter as an alternative communication medium for social movements.

Background

The development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) such as mobile phones has enabled easy access to the internet (Fuchs, 2007). Web 2.0 features social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter which are dominated by communicative features. As a result, the internet has become part of the everyday life in various structures of the society (Hine, 2000; Sade-Beck, 2004). Consequently, the relationship between technology and society has advanced as social activities from all institutions of society has been integrated with technology (Castells, 2011). The increased use of technology, mainly ICT's, has influenced how individuals experience interactions societies (Castells, 2011). The development of web 2.0 enables users to easily produce, share and interact on communication platforms such as Twitter. Social media users can communicate through videos, images and texts which are useful for maintaining intimate ties among users, especially where traditional face-to-face communication fails due to boundaries such as distance. Communication over social media provides immediacy, accessibility and Features such as retweeting and hashtags enable users to have a personal experience of social media sites.

Social networking sites are characterised as networked publics because they constructed by information and communication technologies (Papacharissi, 2010). During social media protests, citizen journalism contributes to a collective construction of events while challenging the narratives produced by traditional media (Papacharissi, 2012).

Social media focuses on interactions, which produce and intensifies social networks. The activities that take place online to create social networks which can be best described by Manuel Castell's concept of the

"network society" (Castells, 2011: p 18). Social networks have always been in existence, but the introduction of ICT's has intensified them, both offline and online (Castells, 2011). Twitter is a micro-blogging social network platform founded in 2006 by Jack Dorsey and can be accessed from the website www.twitter.com (Weller et al., 2013). The Twitter platform enables users to communicate via "tweets" which can consist of a maximum of 140 characters. Social media was an important aspect of #RhodesMustFall, particularly Twitter. While the role of social media in the campaign remains contested, especially in a developing country, the hashtag received tremendous attention on Twitter (Bosch, 2016).

Focus of the study

The internet has become an important factor of the society and has developed into Web 2.0. Web 2.0 focuses on user generated content and communication aspects of the society. The internet has become part of various institutions in the society making it a necessity in everyday activities. The creation and exchange of knowledge is pivotal in modern society. As a result, social institutions foreground the use of the internet and use it to interact. Similarly, social movements have took their organisational and communicative systems to social media. Social media provides a platform that is easy to access and has low costs. This promotes a participatory culture within the society. While South African youth have been perceived to have little interest in political issues of the society, social media has provided a space where they can protest about issues that are relevant to them.

Social media activism is characterised as using social media platforms to challenge societal issues which may have a limited effect if challenged offline. Social networking sites have been used to further the agendas of social movements. Social media provides a space with limited constraints that enable users to easily express themselves and engage with other users in discussions about these issues. Mobile phones also enable users to produce digital images which are relevant to the movement. Individuals can take pictures of protests and post them online. Making users less dependent on traditional media such as radio and newspapers.

This study will research the manner in which the #RhodesMustFall movement used Twitter. Various functions on Twitter enable users to engage in shared experiences of activism and to form collective

identities during protests. The study will engage with theories of the Public sphere, Participatory Culture and Network society in to explore the communication dynamics during #RhodesMustFall.

Approach to the study

This is a qualitative study that will engage with the user-generated content produced online. The data will be collected through purposive sampling and tweets and images from 9 March 2015 – 9 April 2015 will be analysed. A critical discourse analysis will be used to analyse the tweets as they are in a textual form and a semiotic analysis will be conducted to analyse the images.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the relationship between social movements and the network society

2. To explore how social media and Web 2.0 have redefined the public sphere

3. To explore how social media enables a participatory culture

Research questions

1. How has the Twitter platform been used during the #RhodesMustFall movement?

i)   What functions of Twitter have been used for the #RhodesMustFall movement

ii)   In what ways do these functions reflect a participatory culture?

iii)   In what ways have these functions enabled the construction of a networked public?

2. What were the meanings of the #RhodesMustFall movement on Twitter?

   i)   How were tweets used to construct the meanings of #RhodesMustFall movement?

   ii)   How were visual images used to represent the #RhodesMustFall movement?

   iii)   How was the figure 'Rhodes' mobilised in the #RhodesMustFall movement?

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Internet studies

The internet originated from a military based research unit in the United States in 1958 (Castells, 2011; Tsatsou, 2016). In 1960, the US government funded the development of a "packet-switching network that aimed to connect computers and implement the Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) and Internet Protocol (IP) system (Tsatsou, 2016: 16). This system made the network independent of control centres and enabled messages to find their routes along the network. In this manner, several computers could communicate with no authority and without being linked to a central location (Tsatsou, 2016). As a result, the first computer-mediated form of communication over the internet was through electronic mail, popularly known as an email. Therefore, the internet functions as a large network based on a system of connections that facilitates "the interconnection of millions of computers enabling such services as electronic mail and remote access to information" (Bell, 2004: 100). Bell further states that the internet is a "network of networks" (Bell, 2004: 100)

Eventually, open software's were offered to the public. However, they were inclusive of a community of technologists and software designers. Therefore, ordinary households did not have access to the internet. In 1989, Tim Burners-Lee developed the World Wide Web which is an internet system that enables a collection of documents to be connected to each other through hypertext links (Bell, 2004: 160. Through the World Wide Web, the use of the internet was spread globally as it "developed a decentralised model for sharing information across computers" (Tsatsou, 2016: pg 16)

The internet has since transformed from the period of Web 1.0 which mainly focused on the circulation of information to the developments of web 2.0. Web 2.0 features social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter which are dominated by communicative features. The development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) such as mobile phones has enabled easy access to the internet (Fuchs, 2007). Accordingly, the concept of "social networking sites" and the "internet" will be used interchangeably.

As a result, the internet has become part of the everyday life in various structures of the society (Hine, 2000; Sade-Beck, 2004). This development is characterised by domestication which is "the process in which people adapt new technologies and bring it into their home lives" (Sade-Beck, 2004: p.9).

Domestication is also characterised by the process of transferring lifestyles from the physical world into a virtual space. Consequently, the relationship between technology and society has advanced as social activities from all institutions of society has been integrated with technology (Castells, 2011). This relationship will be further discussed in the chapter. However, technology does not determine how individuals will use it but instead its use is dependent on how individuals appropriate it into the society (Papacharissi, 2009). In this manner, technology becomes a text and a context (Bell, 2007).

The increased use of technology, mainly ICT's, has influenced how individuals experience interactions societies (Castells, 2011). The development of web 2.0 enables users to easily produce, share and interact on communication platforms such as Twitter. This presents a paradigmatic shift in media audiences who are now characterised as prosumers as they can simultaneously produce and consume media content (AfricaIn, 2012). Notably, technology does not seek to replace traditional ways of communicating. Instead, it enhances communication and can be used as a tool to overcome boundaries that would limit communication (Castells, 2011). Social media users can communicate through videos, images and texts which are useful for maintaining intimate ties among users, especially where traditional face-to-face communication fails due to boundaries such as distance. Communication over social media provides immediacy, accessibility and continuousness (Sade-Beck, 2004). In this manner, the social networking sites have provided a platform to facilitate discussions that would otherwise not be available or would occur with lesser effect and to a lesser extent (Papacharissi, 2009; Barbera, 2014). Despite the many advantages of communication that social media has provided, face to face communication is still best in providing data such as body language and facial expressions which are limited when using the internet (Sade-Beck, 2004).

Furthermore, social media is a combination of individualism and mass communication (Sade-Beck, 2004). Individuals can use the social networking sites for personal consumption according to their own needs while using mass communication to disseminate information. Also, the rise of social media such as Facebook and Twitter have increased internet usage to be more individualised as they enable users to be more in control of

their online experiences which gives users a sense of agency and autonomy (Dijck and Poell, 2013; Stieglitz et al., 2014).

Features such as retweeting and hashtags enable users to have a personal experience of social media sites. Individuals use social media platforms for self-expression and exposure to different content depending on their personalised networks produced by interactions (Djick and Poell, 2015).

Moreover, Castells (1997) explains that there is also a resistance towards the process of individualisation as individuals participate in online communities that promote a sense of togetherness and eventually the construction of a collective identity. Similarly, Fatima and Papacharissi (2012) observed that hashtags brought a unified experience of activism during the Egyptian protests in 2011.

Online communities and Cybercultures

Social networking sites have also has produced a space whereby users who share the same interests can share information with each other. Notably, the consumption and production of emotional messages online create a sense of strong ties among users (Sade-Beck, 2004) especially in contexts where communication would not be able to take place or would be limited. Therefore, the social media sites construct a sense of online communities.

Nevertheless, various theorists within internet studies have contested the concept of online communities. Therefore, it is essential to clarify the difference between offline and online communities. Offline communities are constituted by geographical locations and shared identities such as religion and ethnicity (Baxter, 2002). On the other hand, online communities are formed through by shared values and interactions (Groenewegen and Moser, 2014; Wellman, 2001).

Although, Kevin Robins (1999) questions if online interactions are sufficient to constitute a community. Paolo Gerbaudo (2012) also argues that online communities weaken social ties by isolating individuals from offline communities as they reduce face to face interactions. Gerbaudo (2012) further argues that online communities reduce interactions to shared values rather than geographical proximity.

On the other hand, Manuel Castells (2011) maintains that online communities include interactions that can be just as rich and complex as traditional face to face interactions. Sharing information and constant connection to other individuals daily can enrich online communities (Boyd, 2014). Wellman (2001) observed that during social media protests, individuals develop a sense of belonging to groups when they share the same experienced and grievances. A study of the Egyptian uprising in 2011, supported that online communities come together using hashtags to represent specific issues (Meraz and Papacharissi, 2013). Moreover, Gorgulu and Varnali (2014) explain that "Twitter users may perceive themselves as members of online communities organised around conflicting ideologies".

Digital divide

The development of digital technologies such as mobile phones has enabled users to have easier access to the internet from any location. For this reason, there has been a rise of smartphone users, particularly in developing countries. Reports demonstrate that two-thirds of adults worldwide own a smartphone and have access to the internet (Poushter, 2016). However, African countries have the least users of mobile phones and therefore fewer internet users in comparison to western countries. Moreover, 47% of South African adults are daily internet users, but only 37% are owners of smartphones (Poushter, 2016). As illustrated, owning a smartphone does not necessarily translate to internet usage. Also, 73% of the internet users in South Africa are also users of social networking sites, with the majority of those individuals being between the ages of 18-34 (Poushter, 2016). From these findings, it is evident that the internet does play a role in South Africa, although it remains inaccessible to the larger percentage of the society.

In a society which is dominated by internet use, it is essential for individuals to have internet access to interact with society. Castells (2011) holds that the spread of ICT's has the potential to foster development in the society. For this reason, society holds information and knowledge to a great status that has social, political and economic implications. Digital technologies have offer a way to decrease inequality by aiming for an information society which is knowledge-based and empowered by having easier access to information (Selwyn, 2004). Unfortunately, in reality, this has not been the case.

The lack of access to ICT's and therefore the internet, has posed a threat to increase rather than decrease inequalities in the society. The concept of digital divide is defined as a lack of access to ICT's and the internet due to unemployment or level of income (Van Djick, 2012). Individuals may also have access to ICT's but lack skills such as reading, to use technologies to gain information online. The ability to access the internet does not directly translate into equal access of information. Acquiring information online requires the necessary skills to know where to find the information and to interpret the knowledge found online (Boyd, 2014). The lack of such skills to attain essential information online has been conceptualised as second level digital divide. Second level digital divide leads to online inequalities whereby those with the necessary skills benefit more from the internet than those who lack the skills (Van Djick, 2012.

The rise of social media sites has also produced spaces in which online communities, and political discussions are facilitated (Papacharissi, 2009). Therefore, those who do not have access to such platforms are further marginalised (Hargittai, 2001; Selwyn, 2004). Consequently, due to the digital divide, the internet may further marginalise the marginalised (Papacharissi, 2009).

Social media and Social networking sites

The most evidential feature of Web 2.0 is the introduction of social media (Tsatsou, 2016). Social media can be defined as a "group of Internet-based applications" (Effing et al., 2011: 28). These applications are based on the user-generated content that was central to the definition of Web 2.0the technology that was advanced by Web 2.0 which allows for user-generated content (Dijck and Poell, 2013; Effing et al., 2011). In 1997, the first social networking site was launched. Sixdegrees.com enabled users to create user profiles and to have a visible friend list. (Ellison, 2007). While these features were common on other sites created before, Sixdegrees.com was the first social networking site to converge them. Eventually, social networking sites such as Youtube developed to feature media sharing tools among users.

Furthermore, MySpace provided a space that would enable bands and their fans to communicate and did not place any age limitation which expanded their userbase (Ellison, 2007). Moreover, Facebook was launched

in 2004 and added additional features such as user-generated applications which enabled developers to create tools on the site according to their needs.

Facebook was also helpful in maintaining offline social ties and enabled users to socialise with their friends online (Ellison, 2007). Eventually, Twitter was launched in 2006 and offered microblogging tools. Evidentially, social networking sites have developed for different purposes but have a common focus on social relationships (Weller et al., 2013).

Social media has been used as an umbrella term for social networking sites but is also inclusive of other sites such as blogs. These terms will be used interchangeably throughout the chapter. Social networking sites are effective in the creation of new identities and communities and strengthen those which are already in existence offline. Papacharissi (1990) explored how identities are performed on Twitter and argues that

Furthermore, Social networking sites have enabled users to have a sense of agency by being able to select their experiences online according to their interests (Dijck and Poell, 2013). Also, social media users also create a profile which that is an expression of their identity. Offline identities are constructed according to the body in the manner that an individual behaves or dresses. While online identities are constructed are constructed according to language, interactions and performance. Lim (2012) explains that "the very foundation of identity is predicated on how and with whom we communicate" (pg 21). Therefore, identity is a form of communication. Papacharissi's (2012) study on performances on Twitter confirms this as she analyses how behaviour on Twitter construct identities through language. In this manner, individuals assume and perform social roles such as activists. Therefore, individual identities can be more common than collective identities (Nel, 2015; Castells, 2011).

In this sense, the expression of these identities is socially constructed. Users construct meaning and experiences through these identities. Therefore, social media is a platform where identities are produced, consumed and are largely mediated (Bell, 2007). Social media also influences identities as it not only useful in spreading information, but it is also useful in spreading certain ideologies (Comunello and Anzera, 2012). Identities that are constructed online are also a tool of mobilisation as individuals will identify with certain ideologies that are portrayed (Chapman, 2016)

Castells calls this form of expressing one's identity online, "mass self-communication" as individuals express themselves to a wide audience (Castells, 2011: 27). Although, audiences are not always defined. Boyd explains that individuals cannot always determine who their content will be exposed to and therefore have an "imagined audience" (Boyd, 2010: 3). On the other hand, critics also argue that social media users are merely just receptive audiences of mediated identities as they are exposed to a variety of audiences daily (Dean, 2003).

Furthermore, perfomance on social media also includes the collective rituals in which users participate in. These rituals are imposed by the codes and conventions of that particular social network. Each platform consists of codes and conventions that require different skills. For example, Facebook and Twitter are coded differently, and each requires different rituals to interact with other users (Papacharissi, 2010).

Social media as a Public sphere

Social media allows users to negotiate what is perceived to be public and what is perceived to be private as they are continually using their private accounts to confront public agenda's (Rheingold, 2008; Ciszek; Dean, 2003; Khamis and Vaughn, 2012; McGuigan, 2012). A public can be defined as a collection of people who share the same interests, identity and experience similar realities through discourse and social engagements (Papacharissi, 2010; Dean, 2003; Boyd, 2007). Such environments should be inclusive and accessible in nature (Boyd, 2007).

Social networking sites are characterised as networked publics because they constructed by information and communication technologies (Papacharissi, 2010). While theorists have contested the idea of social media as a public sphere, it can also be argued that social media has redefined the public sphere or could be another version of it. Papacharissi (2009) acknowledges that social media does have some characteristics of a public sphere but suggests that instead, it should be regarded as a public space rather than a public sphere. While social media does encourage discussions, it does not guarantee a healthy democratic environment during these discussions (Boyd, 2007; Ciszek; Khamis and Vaughn, 2012; Poell and Dijck, 2016; Rheingold, 2008).

The presence of political discussions in a platform does not necessarily result in democratic achievements or ideals (Papacharissi, 2009). Social media represents a space of engagement and a collection of people; in this sense, it could be public space in its own right (Papacharissi, 2010).

The public sphere is perceived as a platform where discussions are facilitated, and individuals are encouraged to express and exchange their opinions. As individuals have easier access to political discussions, social media is also a platform where democracy is practised (Kaur, 2015; Mamdani, 2016; McGuigan, 2012).

As discussed earlier, having access to the internet and social media is understood to be a privilege for the elite, mobile phones have made it possible for middle and lower class also to have access to this platform. Therefore, this inclusiveness of social media allows citizens from different backgrounds to have access to public discussions (Bosch, 2016). Although, it is also exclusive in the sense that not all individuals have access to social media or have knowledge on how to use it.

The liberal concept of the public sphere also suggests that traditional media such as newspapers and radio plays a significant role in influencing public opinion and also can manipulate it in the interest of advertising and public relations and not in the interest of the common good. Traditional media can also influence agenda setting whereby they determine what the public discusses according to the issues that they choose to report on and how they frame them (Khamis and Vaughn, 2011). This influence that traditional media has on the public may compromise the public sphere especially in the presence of tabloids and sensationalism which has created a decline in the interest of politics. Agenda setting on social media is controlled by users rather than media outlets. Individuals on social media have the power to practice citizen journalism instead of relying on traditional media to communicate their stories (Boyd, 2007; Dean, 2003; McGuigan, 2012). Citizen journalism encompasses ordinary individuals engaging in journalistic practices without any professional background (Papacharissi, 2012). During social media protests, citizen journalism contributes to a collective construction of events while challenging the narratives produced by traditional media (Papacharissi, 2012). Traditional media may report events, but citizen journalism on social media allows individuals to communicate about these events from a different perspective (Bosch, 2016). Therefore, social

media creates the potential for ordinary citizens to have access to a vast audience, although this is not guaranteed. In this manner, social media gives voice to a variety of broad collective views and opinions that might not be present in mainstream media.

Papacharissi (2009) suggests that social media represents a public space based on the increased amount of counter-publics that have been facilitated by social media. Counter- publics have always been present in the society but may be more extensive now as individuals can participate in them without the challenge of geographical boundaries. Therefore, social media has increased the visibility and presence of counter-publics. It is from this view that she argues that social media is a public space that facilitates and makes the existence of counter-publics more visible to the society (Ciszek; Costera-Meijer, 2013; Papacharissi, 2009).

As the concept of the bourgeois public sphere has been criticised for being exclusive to specific groups in the society, so has social media. Due to the digital divide, social media can reproduce inequalities that already exist in a society as it is not available to all individuals. These inequalities are also reproduced as particular groups can dominate online discussions. As a result, minority groups will be less represented in discussions. In relation, online discussions can potentially intensify cultural and political differences (Ciszek; Kaur, 2015; Papacharissi, 2009). The concept and debates of the public sphere will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Social media as a Network

Activities and the structure of social media enforce the values of offline social networks which explains the term of social networking sites (Dijck and Poell, 2013; Marwick, 2011). Social media focuses on interactions, which produce and intensifies social networks. The activities that take place online to create social networks which can be best described by Manuel Castell's concept of the "network society" (Castells, 2011: p 18). Social networks have always been in existence, but the introduction of ICT's has intensified them, both offline and online (Castells, 2011). ICT's have enabled easier access to information and the ability for ordinary individuals to produce and share content. The network society concept is concerned with the manner in which technology has changed how people experience a society and the interactions in the society (Castells, 2011; Boyd, 2014). Rather than individuals forming groups with those around them, each

person becomes a network that connects them to various individuals and groups (Wellman, 2001; Boyd, 2014; McCafferty, 2011).

The interactions formed through the network society are based on the logic of space of flows which describes a new organisational structure of societies whereby technology is used by individuals to interact simultaneously from different places (Castells, 2011; Wellman, 2001). Therefore, this fragments the idea of space as the place of interaction becomes abstract. This new way of interacting has restructured the organisational structures of society from communities to networks (Bell, 2007; Bosch, 2016). As a result, information and the exchange of information have become a valuable aspect of society which characterises contemporary societies as information societies (Boyd, 2014; Wellman, 2001; Marwick, 2011).

The relationship between technology and society has enabled intense interactions between various institutions in the society (Bell, 2007). For example, citizens can easily communicate with government structures on Twitter without the constraints they would experience using offline facilities. Consequently, network structures have become non-hierarchical, decentralised and flexible. Accordingly, the development of the network society has fragmented spatial and organisational structures of the society (Boyd, 2014). These networks are also mainly constructed by feedback on issues of the society as opinions are mass produced and are an essential factor of social media (Dijck and Poell, 2013; Boyd, 2007; Wellman, 2001). This increases the potential of political discussions and strengthens the participation in these discussions. In this sense, networks can also be understood as a "public" (Boyd, 2014). These concepts will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Social media and Political participation

As social media has influenced how individuals communicate in society by intensifying it has also influenced how individuals communicate for political purposes (Stieglitz et al., 2014). Political participation can be understood as a mechanism though which individuals express their political views with the intention to influence decisions (AfricaIn, 2012; Sandoval-Almazan and Ramon Gil-Garcia, 2014). Although, counter publics can also influence public opinions by discussing marginalized issues on public platforms. Social media provides individuals with a vehicle to express their opinions and engage in public opinions which

could lead to political discussions. This platform has also been used to negotiate what should be considered a private matter and what should be considered as a public matter. In such discussions, political activities are likely to emerge (Stieglitz et al., 2014; AfricaIn, 2012). A challenge that was faced by individuals was the lack of access to those who make decisions (AfricaIn, 2012; Gonzalez-Lizarraga et al., 2016). This has been resolved by social media is not only used by citizens but in some states it is also used by government administrations to communicate with the public. In most cases this communication takes place during election campaigns such as the campaign employed by the US president, Barack Obama (Stieglitz et al., 2014). The use of social media by politicians can be an advantage as it provides a platform for a two- way communication (Sandoval-Almazan and Ramon Gil-Garcia, 2014).

With the increased participation in political activities and discussions on social media, it has become a platform where democracy is practiced. In contrast, the presence of politicians on social media can also be a disadvantage as they can easily influence public opinions and political discussions (Stieglitz et al., 2014; Gonzalez-Lizarraga et al., 2016). Additionally, in cases where protests use social media for mobilization and communication, politicians have the opportunity to use social media as a means to surveillance these discussions. On Twitter, politicians have access to public opinions formed on issues such as #RhodesMustFall.

Researchers such as Valenzuela and Gonzlalez-Lizarraga have studied the relationship between individuals who engage in political activities and their use of social media (Gonzalez-Lizarraga et al., 2016; Valenzuela, 2013).

Research by Sebastián Valenzuela (2013) argues that participants involved in recent political activities are frequent social media users. In analyzing why such contemporary protests are successful, Valenzuela found several reasons for this. The increased participation in political activities encourages other individuals to also participate and it builds trust in the campaign. Social media has become a platform for mobilization, therefore promoting collective action in the protests (Chapman, 2016). The mobilization on social media is effective due to easy access to information that would otherwise not be available or would be limited to certain individuals. Access to information at grassroots level is likely to provide more opportunities of collective action (Gerbaudo, 2012; Gonzalez-Lizarraga et al., 2016). Valenzuela (2013) observed that

frequent use in of social media allowed individuals to be exposed to knowledge about public affairs which that encouraged users to participate in these matters.

As individuals are exposed to public matters they are also encouraged to speak out about issues that are relevant to them. These issues become collective issues when other individuals share their experiences of the same issue. Paolo Gerbaoudo argues that the crucial element in understanding the role of social media in protests is their "interaction with and mediation of emerging forms of public gatherings" (Gerbaudo, 2012: pg 9) . Interactions are not only about exchanging opinions and information, but also about creating a discourse in how these discussions are interpreted and processed by other users. When such discussions are facilitated, collective action is likely to be incited which results in mobilization. Therefore, such discussions create a need to link them to a location or to an activity which will achieve an end result from them (Gerbaudo, 2012). When social media protests are used simultaneously with offline practices, they are likely to produce greater results (Chiluwa and Ifukor, 2015). Their research on #BringBackOurGirls campaign illustrates this, as although the campaign was recognized around the world with a number of popular icons participating and was successful in provoking emotional responses from individuals, as the campaign did not have any offline activities it did not produce substantial results (Chiluwa and Ifukor, 2015).

In contrast, other campaigns such as the Egyptian uprising that were linked to offline spaces produced more substantial results (Tufekci and Wilson, 2012). Notably, the relationship between online and offline protests is still ambivalent as the Green Movement's protests against the election of President Ahmed Inejad (Tufekci and Wilson, 2012; Storck, 2011; AfricaIn, 2012).

Social media activism

Social media activism can be defined as the act of using social networking sites to challenge political issues with an intended outcome that may be difficult or impossible to achieve using offline facilities (Jenkins et al., 2009; Khamis and Vaughn, 2011). Although there are challenges in citizens participating in politics, participation is considered to be an essential element of democracy (Varnali and Gorgulu, 2015). The main aim of citizen participation is the ability to influence government decisions (Varnali and Gorgulu, 2015;

Jenkins et al., 2009). As participation is an essential element in social media activism, it will be briefly outlined in this chapter then discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Participation is an important factor regarding social media uses, particularly in the use of social media in enabling increased participation in politics. As a result, this participation has influenced effected how contemporary protests are conducted (Chapman, 2016; Jenkins et al., 2009). It is in this manner that social media encourages a participatory culture which is also a fundamental feature of Web 2.0. The rise of social media activism is fueled by individuals or groups who use social media to challenge political issues of the society and shared experiences about a specific issue (Chapman, 2016). The amount of participation and support of that issue online is symbolic of other individuals willing to join them in challenging the problem. Therefore social media has been used as a tool to enhance participation, express opinions, spread information and mobilise protests (Nel, 2015; Rheingold, 2008). Varnali et al. (2015) observed that during online protests, there is a strong sense of the "us" and "them" perception which is developed by participants to differentiate themselves from those that they are against.

Social media has the power to spread information about protests and to also organise demonstrations (Comunello and Anzera, 2012). The use of social media as a tool for protests is evidential that to a great extent online activities can be a reflection of offline societies and in some ways, there are shared characteristics of revolutions influenced by the social media and traditional revolutions. (Comunello and Anzera, 2012; Rheingold, 2008).

 Although social media cannot take full credit for the success of these protests, its significant influence on them cannot be denied (Comunello and Anzera, 2012). Social media as an organisational tool, a quick way to spread information and enables grassroots journalism (Comunello and Anzera, 2011).Interactions about specific issues increases as more users gain interest and disseminate information and knowledge on it (Nel, 2015). This contributes to the protests, as activism is based on understanding the history and the present circumstances of a particular issue (Nel, 2015).Social media users also gain a sense of agency by creating user-generated news updates instead of relying on traditional media to be updated (Nel, 2015).

Therefore, social media foregrounds user opinions communicated to a broad audience. Although traditional media outlets also make use of social media in broadcasting news, ordinary users have the same opportunity to mass communicate messages. This could not be done through traditional media, as citizens did not have equal opportunities to tell their stories through these mediums and also did not have any control over how their stories are told.

While social media has increased the possibilities of collective action (Bosch, 2016), some theorists have welcomed the opportunities while others have feared for the effects that it might have offline (Bargh and McKenna, 2004; Papacharissi, 2009). The arguments around this will be outlined below. Cyber-utopians are those who have welcomed and see positive aspects of social media while cyber-dystopians are theorists who have strongly cautioned against the effects of social media (Morozov, 2012: pg 189).

Utopian and Dystopian views

In his book, the net delusion, Morozov (2012) warns that individuals are pulled into the illusion of contributing to a campaign through online interactions which may not be sufficient to influence offline structures. The author refers to "slacktivism" (Morozov, 2012: pg 201)   an illusion that online participation is meaningful without taking the risk of fully participating in the campaign offline (Morozov, 2012; McCafferty, 2011; AfricaIn, 2012). He argues that such participation functions to give individuals satisfaction that they have contributed meaningfully to a cause. Furthermore, participation online is not an indication that the individual is fully committed to the campaign to also participate in it offline. Also, he refers to "civic promiscuity" (Morozov, 2012: , p 190) which describes how individuals may join several campaigns online as it is easy to do so but may not have a deep commitment to any of them.

In his argument, Morozov mostly refers to Facebook but the same argument can be applied to Twitter as they are both social networking sites. In this discussion, he states that the number of users who have joined a group is perceived to be an indication of mass support for the campaign, but the impact of the group on the cause is not guaranteed.

This can be applied to Twitter as the use of hashtags has a similar effect on the groups on Facebook. The number of users that a campaign attracts is an essential aspect as it symbolises the amount of support the campaign may have. This may become confusing as not all individuals will be equally committed and active in the campaign. Morozov does agree that the number of participants in a campaign makes it seem more trustworthy and can therefore encourage participation from others. The group may be more effective if the participants are from the same location can organise offline action. This translates awareness into action. There is a disadvantage of converting a large online group into collective action. A large number of individuals showing interest in the campaign may lead to other individuals not putting in further effort due to the perception that there are a large number of individuals putting in the effort already.

In contrast, Shirky (2011) argues that the concept of "slacktivism" is irrelevant because individuals who are fully committed to a campaign and participate in it offline are also social media users. Research conducted by Valenzuela (2013) supports this as it showed that most individuals that attended protests on the first day were social media users. In his book, here comes everybody, Shirky (2011) presents the various ways in which social media has contributed to the success of contemporary social movements and argues that these contributions should not be ignored as they offer great opportunities.

From the observation of recent contemporary protests such as the Arab springs, it is evident that social media has been a great tool to facilitate awareness around grassroot issues that would otherwise not gain as much attention (Khamis and Vaughn, 2011; AfricaIn, 2012). Awareness is achieved through sharing information that would otherwise not be available and as a result has enhanced collective action. However, "social media does not create collective action, they merely remove the obstacles to it" (Shirky, 2008: p 159). The platform has enabled the practice of freedom of expression and agency by marginalised individuals. For example, in the case of the protest that took place in Egypt in 2011, the inclusive nature of social media empowered women to express their opinions to a public which was not encouraged in offline settings (Khamis and Vaughn, 2011).

Arguably, the role of social media in protests is significant as it some governments perceive it as a threat. Several countries have tried to regulate and control the use of social media during protest, in most cases to prevent mobilisation and freedom of speech (Aouragh and Alexander, 2011; Varnali and Gorgulu, 2015; AfricaIn, 2012; Shirky, 2008).

Most studies on social media activism have focused on events that took place in the global north (Comunello and Anzera, 2012; Aouragh and Alexander, 2011; Effing et al., 2011; Gerbaudo, 2012; Gerbaudo and Treré, 2015; Weller et al., 2013). Other studies of the #RhodesMustFall have focused on memorial and heritage aspects of the movement. While Bosch (2016) has also focused on the social media aspect of the campaign, she used quantitative research methods (Bosch, 2016; Butler-Adam, 2016; Kros, 2015; Luescher, 2016; Maylam, 2002; Mdudumane, 2005; Pather, 2015). This study focuses on social media aspect of #RhodesMustFall from a qualitative perspective. Therefore, there is a need to study the social media protests that have occurred in the global south. About the #RhodesMustFall movement, there is a need to understand this movement regarding the social media aspect which played a significant role in it.

The manner in which collective action on social media is conducted has also been criticised due to its structure. Stieglitz (2014) argues that collective action is most successful when there are structures and rules of engagement to follow. This is opposite effect that social media has on contemporary protests. Social movements promoted on social media are usually spontaneous, horizontal and do not have recognisable leaders (Gerbaudo, 2012; Khamis and Vaughn, 2011).

 Social media is a powerful tool for mobilisation. Paolo Gerbaudo defines mobilisation as a process of "gathering or assembling of individuals and groups around something they share in common" (Gerbaudo, 2012: p 20). The increase of mobilisation in protests is not only a result of the development of digital technology but is also largely dependent on a shared interest in challenging grassroot issues (Gerbaudo, 2012). Gerbaudo argues that the ideology of a horizontal structure in social media protests ignores that the process of mobilisation involves those that mobilise and those that are being assembled. Therefore there are those who lead and those who follow (Gerbaudo, 2012).

Furthermore, Gerbaudo refers to a "choreography of assembly" which is "symbolic construction of a public space" (Gerbaudo, 2012: p 21). This relates to the argument discussed earlier by Papacharissi (2012) where she conceptualises social media as a public space. Gerbaudo (2012) uses this term to argue against the notion that social media activism is spontaneous. The "Choreography of assembly" explains that since there are no formal organisational structures for contemporary protests, the forms of communication used for protests become the organisational structure. The type of communication used to mobilise, sets the emotion and atmosphere of the protests that will happen in an established location (Gerbaudo, 2012).

Twitter

Twitter is a micro-blogging social network platform founded in 2006 by Jack Dorsey and can be accessed from the website www.twitter.com (Weller et al., 2013). The Twitter platform enables users to communicate via "tweets" which can consist of a maximum of 140 characters. Users are required to "follow" each other to have constant updates of other user's posts. Individuals can interact with each other by placing another user's handle (@username) on a message (Deller, 2011; Nel, 2015). Statuses can circulate by other users "retweeting" (RT) an individual's status which is seen by users who do not necessarily follow the person who initially posted the status but the person who "retweeted" it (Bosch, 2016). Users also have the option to quote a tweet with a response to it. By quoting, users give each other an illusion of a continuous conversation (Hine, 2000). Twitter also allows for mass communication to a wide audience and government institutions. The visibility of the tweet depends on the number of users who "retweet" it which can cause it to trend. Trends on Twitter are determined by a high volume of tweets that contain certain phrases or words. A tweet can trend through a high number of retweets which will cause it to be dominant on the system at the time. On the homepage, Twitter offers a range of hashtags which are trending in real time so users can keep up with current events and conversations (Deller, 2011). The trending hashtag function encourages a shared use of words or phrases relating to an event and provides a way for users to engage in the conversation (Deller, 2011).

Twitter also uses the hashtag (#) as an organisational method where users can track what others are tweeting on specific issues without having to follow each user that comments on that topic. This code acts as a hyperlink and users who wish to engage in broader communicative processes use the hashtag in their tweets. The hashtag also increases the visibility of the user's tweets to audiences beyond those who follow the user (Weller et al., 2013; Marwick, 2011). The topic has a phrase such as #RhodesMustFall, which is attached to a hashtag as a way of mass communication from a user on related issues. It focuses on constant updating of current events and news, so it is often referred to as "real-time social networking" (Deller, 2011; Marwick, 2011).

The hashtag also functions as a tool for a group of individuals to gather and discuss topics of common interest (Weller et al., 2013). Hashtags can contribute to forming and promoting certain identities. The rise of Black Twitter has demonstrated the manner in which users form hashtags that promote certain identities and are specific to certain experiences (Sharma, 2013). Hashtags on Black Twitter are usually created around issues of race, black identity and shared experiences. As a result, networks that specifically interrogate black culture and experiences (Sharma, 2013). While #RhodesMustFall explores issues of race, it is not certain if it is part of black twitter.

Furthermore, the platform promotes user-generated content that has changed how media is being consumed. Ordinary individuals can become producers of media content. In the context of Twitter, user-generated content is not only seen as a mode of production but also as a means of communication. Through user-generated content, users form new ways of communicating and manifesting in a participatory culture. For example, internet memes that are created through images or videos. Memes are "rapidly spreading, momentarily salient in jokes; recognisable images (and image forms) and other artifacts like viral videos…" (Weller et al., 2013: 138).

Twitter has been used as a tool to empower South African youth in recent protests such as the #RhodesMustFall and the #FeesMustFall campaign (Bosch, 2016). Bosch (2016) argues that South African youth have previously shown a lack of participation and interest in political engagement, but the internet has promoted civic engagement. South African youth have used Twitter as a platform to shape news agendas according to the issues that are relevant to them. It has also been used in South Africa to participate in and facilitate political discussions (Bosch, 2016). Some South African government officials such as the President can also be reached on Twitter using the @PresidencyZA handle. This has allowed government officials to use Twitter to interact with individuals and provide information about initiatives (AfricaIn, 2012). But this study is not concerned with how politicians make use of the social media, but in how citizens/individuals use social media to promote online activism.

Twitter allows individuals to communicate about protests happening in their local area. Therefore, the platform has been used to mobilise individuals to participate in the discussion using the hashtag, and to also mobilise individuals to join in offline activities that would result in the desired outcome (Varnali and Gorgulu, 2015). Aa a result, collective action is achieved both offline and online, and awareness is spread to international countries (Tufekci and Wilson, 2012).

Moreover, Twitter also enables users to be in control of reporting events, especially in countries such as Egypt and Turkey whereby traditional media was censored not to report about the protests (Varnali and Gorgulu, 2015; Sandoval-Almazan and Ramon Gil-Garcia, 2014). Using hashtags, counter-publics are developed, and individuals are in control of agenda-setting grassroot issues.

As Twitter promotes participation and dialogue, political discussions also take place on social media or social networking sites. Twitter is an ideal network to disseminate information and political opinions to the critical mass (Stieglitz et al., 2014; Marwick, 2011). Such communication has influenced politics in a new way as governments have no jurisdiction over the network. Twitter is an unrestricted platform for freedom of expression, and therefore, governments in countries such as Turkey have requested for Twitter to regulate political content posted online, in most times such requests have been unsuccessful (Nel, 2015; Varnali and Gorgulu, 2015).

Twitter has been a common aspect of recent uprisings, although its role in these protests has been contested as discussed in cyber-utopian and dystopian views. Additionally, concepts such as "Twitter revolutions" have been used to describe recent uprisings such as the Arab springs and Egypt uprising (Stieglitz et al., 2014; Marwick, 2011). This concept has been contested as it implies that Twitter has been the leading cause in such uprisings (Papacharissi, 2009; Morozov, 2012). While other aspects have also contributed to such uprisings, Twitter has been a common platform in these protests. Therefore, it cannot be ignored that Twitter plays an important role in contemporary protests. Bosch (2016) has highlighted Twitter as a tool that facilitated discussions of #RhodesMustFall online and offline. As a result, the discourse of the movement on Twitter influenced the public perception of the movement.

#RhodesMustFall movement

The #RhodesMustFall movement began on the 9 March 2015 and the statue was eventually removed on the 9th of April 2015 (Lillie, 2015). The issue that was most explicit was the lack of transformation in terms of names of the roads and buildings on the campus.

 This lack of transformation was also evident in the number of black staff that lectured at the University and also the curriculum of the University (Lillie, 2015). The history of Cecil John Rhodes will first be discussed followed by the discussion of me movement.

Cecil John Rhodes

Cecil John Rhodes was born in 1853 in England, Bishops Stortford. He relocated to South Africa and lived with his brother due to health reasons (Mdudumane, 2005). He later acquired a diamond mine and other businesses (Mdudumane,2005).

His mission was to build an empire and "civilise" South Africa. His mission to "civilise" South Africa included racial exclusion, and he introduced the act to remove black people from their land and to put them in labour. Cecil Rhodes believed that the Anglo-Saxon race was much superior to blacks and that the resources of South Africa should only belong to them (Mdudumane, 2005; Laurore, 2016).

In 1880, he became the prime minister of the Cape. Rhodes donated the land that is currently occupied by the University of Cape Town. Some argue that the land did not belong to him as it was gained it through colonisation. Context plays a vital role in this manner as Rhodes was previously perceived as a hero but in post-apartheid South Africa, he is regarded as a colonialist. Due to this reason, the name of Cecil Rhodes has been kept alive through various trusts and statues.

The statue of Cecil Rhodes was designed by British architect, Herbert Baker in 1909. It was later sculpted and installed by Manon Walgate in 1934 (Kros, 2015; Laurore, 2016). This statue was placed at the University of Cape Town upper campus. The statue overlooks the middle and lower campuses; it also looks over the city and the Cape Flats (Pather, 2015). The statue was placed in honour of Rhodes who donated the land which the University of Cape Town stands on (Mulgrew, 2015; Laurore, 2016). This statue is located in a place of education which brings a reminder of the past to black students and staff (Mulgrew, 2015; Laurore, 2016). Rhodes University has also been named after Cecil Rhodes.

Cecil Rhodes legacy is also celebrated through the Rhodes scholarship which affords students with the opportunity to study at the international institution, Oxford University. The scholarship which is still present has funded over 6000 students including black students (Maylam and Kenny, 2003). Nelson Mandela acknowledged Rhodes Scholarship by developing the Mandela Rhodes foundation which aims to support postgraduate studies of African students. The idea behind this scholarship was to combine colonial and democratic ideologies which represent both the past and present context of South Africa (Mdudumane, 2005). Cecil Rhodes legacy is still resembled in post-apartheid South Africa even when his character does not resemble the ideologies of democracy and equality (Luescher, 2016; Maylam and Kenny, 2003).

Therefore, through statues, names of scholarships and educational institutions, the name of Cecil Rhodes has been associated with honour, respect and excellence rather than British imperialism (Luescher, 2016; Laurore, 2016). It is also in this manner that African history is not represented in institutions and only one side of history is represented (Luescher, 2016; Laurore, 2016).

The representation of his memory has obscured his role in racial segregation in South Africa. Also, the context of figures is subject to change with time as they become open to being interpreted differently. In this manner, Cecil Rhodes may have been viewed as a hero which resulted in how he is represented, but his context in a democratic country has been challenged (Laurore, 2016). Furthermore, the statue in some sense may be perceived as a monument. Monuments are a representation and reflection of someone/something significance in the past. The power that they used to have on specific subjects can still be attributed to the presence of their representations (Kros, 2015; Laurore, 2016). There are various colonialist statues around South Africa due to the Truth and Reconciliation policy (Van der Walt et al., 2003). This policy aimed to emphasise nation building and a structural for all races. The policy also intended to represent the history and culture of all races throughout the country. Although these statues were installed during colonialism, their presence in present South Africa leads to the perception of only one history being represented and therefore other races feeling marginalised (Van der Walt et al., 2003).

Also, monuments can have the power of the person that they aim to represent. The presence of the monument can exercise the same power of the individual that they are serving (Kros, 2015; Pather, 2015). In this manner, the statue of Cecil Rhodes is experienced as human and is given human qualities by students. This is evident in the act of Chumani Maxwell who threw human faeces at the statue on 9 March 2015 (Laurore, 2016; Pather, 2015).

A few months before the #Rhodesmustfall campaign began, there were complaints about the university's lack of black staff and transformation to the current vice chancellor of the University is Max Price (Pather, 2015). Maxwell's action marked the beginning of #RhodesMustFall following various demonstrations by students and panel discussions from the UCT council. The lack of black staff in the university is seen by the protestor's as denying black students role models they can look up to it is also symbolic of the lack of opportunities for black individuals in academia (Koen et al., 2006).

The presence of the statue and colonial paintings are symbolic of the lack of transformation in the University, especially at the University Of Cape Town (UCT) is a previously white institution (Kros, 2015; Bosch, 2016; Koen et al., 2006).

The term "transformation" was central in debates about this campaign. Transformation has dominated the discourse of democracy in South Africa, but it is a term that has been used loosely. In this manner, the campaign challenged the meaning of what transformation means in a democratic South Africa (Luescher, 2016; Koen et al., 2006).

In discussing democracy, South African political leaders have often referred to the concept of a rainbow nation, which entails the ideology of embracing the diversity of races in the country. This term was coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu with the purpose to facilitate the narrative of nation building (Van der Walt et al., 2003) The University has been perceived as an institution that does not acknowledge or resemble the variety of races in the country and their narratives (Luescher, 2016). The nation still experiences social injustices and inequality. The presence of statues, buildings and street names around the country that are a representation of a colonialist past result in citizens continuously negotiating identity and history (Bosch, 2016; Kros, 2015). In the presence of such conflicts, it can be concluded that South Africa can be described as a democracy that is still in transition (Bosch, 2016). In essence, political, social media movements are usually expressions of frustrations rooted in structural issues such as an unresponsive government (Nel, 2015).

The #RhodesMustFall mission statement which was released on the 25th of March explained that the central issue was not the statue but what the statue represented and the aspects of these representations that still exist in the university (Kros, 2015; Lillie, 2015). The campaign also aimed to emphasise the experiences of black students in the University that has resulted in feelings of oppression while on campus (Koen et al., 2006).

 Once an understanding of the protests was gained, it was evidential that this movement was also not just about one university but the disadvantages of many of the universities in South Africa such as Rhodes University, University of KwaZulu-Natal and Witwatersrand University (Kros, 2015; Pather, 2015). [1]

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[1] The #RhodesMustFall movement led to another movement which was #FeesMustFall (Bosch, 2016). This movement was against the constant increase of higher education fees that could not be afforded due to issues such as poverty, social injustice and inequalities in the society. There were also other movements in universities such as Stellenbosch University and the University of Pretoria which were against Afrikaans as a medium of instruction (Molefe, 2016).

This campaign evoked an argument about the removal of the statue. Some saw the campaign to remove the statue as a display of historical ignorance and a disrespectful reaction to the act of Cecil Rhodes donating his land for educational purposes (Kros, 2015; Pather, 2015; Badat; Maylam, 2002; Maylam and Kenny, 2003). Others saw the statue as still having the power to be oppressive over the students (Kros, 2015; Maylam, 2002). In this manner, history is the focus of the argument as some felt that history should be embraced for what it was and as a reminder of how far the country has come (Badat). Others felt that the actions of Cecil Rhodes historically, were unacceptable and there should be no reminder of this brutal history in the post-apartheid era (Kros, 2015; Pather, 2015).

The other movements which arose from the #RhodesMustFall movement are an indication that the movement was not just about the statue in the University of Cape Town but lack of transformation as a whole in South Africa. The movements above resulted in violence between students and the police (Molefe, 2016).

#RhodesMustFall campaign online

Social media was an important aspect of #RhodesMustFall, particularly Twitter. While the role of social media in the campaign remains contested, especially in a developing country, the hashtag received tremendous attention on Twitter (Bosch, 2016). This is because it allowed for mass communication and communication between protesters through a medium they were already using. Members could express their views and opinions without having membership of a particular political organisation (Bosch, 2016). This medium also enabled participants who did not attend the University of Cape Town and participants who did not stay in Cape Town to be continuously updated and also engage with the protest itself.

Those who attended other universities were also encouraged to protest about transformational issues in their universities, which is how the other movements developed (Bosch, 2016). For this reason, issues such as decolonization became part of the discourse. Achille Mbembe (2015) states that decolonization is about "rejecting the assumption that the modern west is the central root of Africa's consciousness and cultural heritage" (Mbembe, 2015: 16). This includes the decolonization of higher learning institutions and public spaces (Mbembe, 2015). This intensified the protest itself as it gained momentum and attention on social media, which increased the relationship between the protesters and political actors without social constraints that would occur in a gathering (Bosch, 2016).

The #RhodesMustFall campaign on Twitter also presented new organisational and mobilising methods in student protests in South Africa. Not only did this campaign encourage individuals to participate in the offline demonstrations, but it also inspired individuals to participate in the discussions of the protests online. Therefore, this presented the ability of student movements to occupy online and offline spaces simultaneously (Luescher, 2016). Furthermore, this campaign also influenced traditional news agendas as they took control of agenda-setting through citizen journalism online (Luescher, 2016).

Therefore, Twitter has proved to be a platform in which young people can influence agenda setting by facilitating discussions about issues that are relevant to them. The result of the ability to promote these discussions is an increased participation in political matters (Bosch, 2016). Although Twitter contributed to the #RhodesMustFall campaign, the research available on the campaign focuses on the memory, heritage and identity aspects of it (Bosch, 2016; Kros, 2015; Laurore, 2016; Lillie, 2015; Pather, 2015). This research will focus on the relationship between the campaign and how Twitter contributed to the campaign.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

While previous studies of the #RhodesMustFall campaign outlined in the previous chapter focused on decolonization, memory and heritage (Kros, 2016; Laurore, 2016; Lemon, 2016), my analysis of this campaign will instead focus on the role of social media. In order to examine the role Twitter played in the #RhodesMustFall movement, the following three theories are relevant. Firstly, Jürgen Habermas' theory of the public sphere will be used to understand how the Twitter platform can regarded as a public space in which discussions can take place. Secondly, Manuel Castell's network society can be useful in understanding the networks that form during such discussions. It is also useful in understanding the influence of sharing information and knowledge on social structures (Bell, 2007; Castells, 2011b). This is demonstrated in Twitter being used as a platform for social protests. Lastly, Henry Jenkins' theory participatory culture will be employed to understand how Twitter enables participation. These theories are all appropriate to this study because they will enable me to explore how the social media platform of Twitter both constructs a networked public and enables participation through user-generated content in the #RhodesMustFall campaign.

The public sphere

The concept of the public sphere was developed by Jürgen Habermas in the bourgeois era during the 18th century in Europe when capitalism was emerging (Habermas et al., 1974). Habermas first introduced the public sphere in his book - The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (Habermas, 1989), which aimed to understand the contexts, structures and the dynamics of the public sphere that was emerging at that time. Notably, the context of the book is based on the 18th century, which was very much different from the society that we live in today. However, its core principles are still applicable to a South African context in the 21st century (Bosch, 2016; Bruns and Highfield, 2016). Tanja Bosch (2016) utilised this theory to analyse Twitter as a discursive space and a networked public. The public sphere developed in opposition of to the supreme state in which only a few individuals were involved in decision-making processes that controlled all aspects of the society (Habermas, 1991; Habermas et al., 1974).

Such decisions also constituted how individuals should live their lives. In contrast to the old system of the monarchy, the public sphere intended to provide open access to all individuals for them to have the opportunity to influence decision-making processes (Calhoun, 2011; Habermas et al., 1974; Kellner, 2014). Furthermore, the bourgeois public sphere aimed to be independent of the church, government and economic institutions. Consequently, it developed a civil society which is a society that is free from institutions and has the freedom to have a self-organising social life (Calhoun, 2011).

 The public sphere can be defined is defined by Habermas as "a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed" (Habermas et al., 1974: 2). It is a space where private individuals come together to discuss matters of common interest and concern. The term "Public" is complex and polysemic, but in the context of the public sphere, as outlined by Habermas, it entails a sense of accessibility and openness to all individuals (Habermas, 1991). In relation, public opinion is formed through access to information and discussions which result in a critical judgment from the public about a matter (Fraser, 1990; Habermas, 1991). The public sphere is helpful in understanding how a democratic society should function as it holds that all individuals should have equal access to information and discussions that may influence decision-making processes (McKee, 2005). Through these aspects, the public sphere aims to act as a mediator between the state and the society by appointing an institution that holds the state accountable through discourse (Habermas et al., 1974).

Evidentially, access is a crucial element to the public sphere. The concept emphasises citizen participation enacted through discussions as well as equal and unrestricted access to discursive spaces (Fraser, 1990). To achieve equality, the Habermasian public sphere intended to be free of social order (Habermas, 1991; Habermas et al., 1974). In reality, this was not possible as social dynamics influenced access and participation within the public sphere (Fraser, 1990). Not to mention that public sphere developed in a contextualised society highly constituted by social order (Fraser, 1990). During the development of the concept, individuals gained access to information through reading clubs and access to discursive places was gained through coffee houses (Habermas, 1991; Habermas et al., 1974).

However, this presented a problem as such areas were prone to social status and only the elite had access. Furthermore, women had not achieved equal rights at that time. Therefore they were not allowed to participate in public discussions. As a result, Fraser (1990) argues that equality and unrestricted access was not present in the public sphere (Fraser, 1990).

Nancy Fraser argues that Habermas failed to acknowledge the existence of other public spheres that may have existed due to this exclusion (Fraser, 1990). Mainly focusing on the exclusion of females, she maintains that women found other ways to participate in the public sphere and therefore, constituted a counter-public to the universal public sphere that Habermas focused on (Fraser, 1990). Individuals who find alternative means of participation and public expression, which distinguish themselves from the central public sphere of that society, constitute counter-publics (Fraser, 1990; McKee, 2005).

Counter public spheres do not only function to provide a platform for the marginalised but also enable individuals to express and construct their reality and identities through language. Throughout her critique, Fraser (1990) emphasises that while freedom of expression is a desirable aspect of the public sphere, the ability to "speak in one's voice" is equally important (Fraser, 1990). Through discourse, language is a tool to marginalise or exclude individuals as it may promote some views while discouraging others. Counter public spheres can create their own discourse around relevant matters and adopt a style of discussion to construct their reality (Fraser, 1990).

Furthermore, social movements have also questioned what constitutes a public matter. (Habermas et al., 1974). Meaning that there is a selection of issues which the public can have an opinion in and private matters which do not need public deliberation. The discussions which fall into the private sphere have also been contested (Fraser, 1990). In the definition of the public sphere, Habermas states that individuals discuss issues of common concern. This might be problematic as not all individuals will be concerned about similar issues. For example, in earlier times effects of domestic violence were perceived to be private (Fraser, 1990). It was therefore essential for feminists to form a subaltern counter-public in which they can create their discourse around matters of domestic violence. In instigating such a conversation, it became a discussion with other public spheres and eventually became a widespread discussion. As a result, the issue of domestic violence became a common concern and interest (Fraser, 1990).

Similarly, #RhodesMustFall became a public issue based on private experiences of social injustice and inequality that linked to identity and history (Kros, 2015). In this sense, democratic publicity requires opportunities for minorities to be able to introduce new issues of concern that have not necessarily been perceived as common issues or public issues before (McKee, 2005).

Although historically, the public sphere has been used to refer to geographical locations, it has been used to describe virtual settings such as the internet where individuals can exchange ideas, and public opinions can be formed (McKee, 2005). In modern society, public spaces such as malls have become more focused on individualised experiences and less about communication and interactions between a diversity of individuals. For this reason, individuals have turned to mediated communication channels to engage in intense and diverse conversations about the issues of the society (Gerbaudo, 2012).

Traditional media and broadcast media such as independent newspapers and television became infused into the public sphere. While conventional media developed before public spaces became individualised, it was established to create a greater sense of publicity and to provide unrestricted access to public affairs (Kellner, 2014). The media also became an instrument of discussion and a platform to communicate and form public opinion. However, the media was monopolised by capitalised organisations (Kellner, 2014). Habermas (1991) indicates that such media eventually jeopardised the public sphere as it became commercialised and therefore dominated by the interests and the ideology of capitalism. The presence of media in the public sphere contradicted the initial concept of the public sphere. As media outlets control information and become opinion leaders according to their framing processes which include the events they select to report and the manner in that they report those events, which as a result can influence public opinion (McKee, 2005).

The internet has provided a space with vast amounts of information where new ideas are widely circulated. With the rise of information and communication technology, the internet has become easier and cheaper to access (Papacharissi, 2002). Alongside its easy access, the internet provides a platform with regulation and control from government institutions, which reduces the potential for the state to regulate or control political communication and the flow of information (Kelly Garrett, 2006).

Furthermore, the internet has enabled access to platforms such as social media. Access to social media platforms is facilitated by digital technology such as mobile phones. Osljak (2014) states that individuals give meaning to alternative spaces when they require communicative freedom and a means to challenge democracy (Osljak, 2014: pg 1385). Due to development of the internet as a means of communication, social media has become an alternative space where discussion of public matters takes place (Osljak, 2014; Gerbaudo, 2012). While traditional platforms only allow a selected few to express their opinions, social media platforms have transformed communicative processes as they will enable any user registered on their site to voice their opinion to the public (Bruns and Highfield, 2016).

Unfortunately, while social media represents a type of public, it is not accessible to all individuals due to the digital divide. Individuals who do not have access to information and communication technologies lack the means to access the discussions on the platform. Additionally, individuals may have means to access social media but lack the knowledge on how to use it; as a result, they are marginalised from the platform (Bruns and Highfield, 2016).

Social media such as Twitter, allow local and international users to engage with other individuals who have shared concerns through hashtags (Weller et al., 2013). The purpose of a hashtag is to enable users to gather to discuss specific issues. Hashtags can also function as an issue public, which is constituted by individuals gathering to address a particular topic such as #RhodesMustFall (Weller et al., 2013). Such publics have been criticised that they only exist temporarily as individuals just come together when specific issues emerge and after that the public's dissolve (McKee, 2005).

Moreover, users on Twitter have the option to present any other content in a tweet as a link, including material on the platform of Twitter. Hashtags themselves are displayed in the form of a link (Weller et al., 2013). Links are similar to maps and allow users to navigate online content easily (Bell, 2007). As a result, the ability to include links that can be inclusive of another platform can produce a networked public sphere (Weller et al., 2013).

The use of hashtags on Twitter can be characterised as counter-public spheres (Fraser, 1990; Weller et al., 2013). As mentioned above, the public sphere aimed to include all individuals, but due to social orders and gender, this was not a reality.

Twitter application platform lists multiple trending topics as that presently have the most prevalent tweets as hashtags. This enables users to join a hashtag that applies to their interest by participating in it or reading the tweets about it. It also allows users to be able to participate in multiple discussions and for numerous communities to exist at the same time (Weller et al., 2013). As a result, social media has intensified the amount of counter-public spheres. The high numbers of counter-public spheres produced in social media are seen to be a threat as they may result in a fragmented rather than a unified public sphere (Weller et al., 2013). Fragmented public spheres can also overlap as individuals may have more than one interest, and institutions such as culture and politics are most likely to cross, in this manner they are not entirely incoherent (McKee, 2005).

As evident from the above discussion, the idea of redefining the public sphere is not new. This is demonstrated by Fraser who dismissed the idea of a singular, universal public sphere (Bruns and Highfield, 2016). Bruns and Highfield (2016) have criticised social media to as not reflective of a public sphere. Although, there are many public spheres, with different characteristics, which do not necessarily submit to the Habermasian public sphere, but mainly still constitute a public sphere as they are governed by discursive practices (Bruns and Highfield, 2016). Social media plays a significant role in the society, and the communication dynamics that take place on it can be relevant enough to constitute a public sphere. Furthermore, participation on social media exposes differences among individuals' beliefs and attitudes and promotes dialogue which allows individuals to be in constant negotiation about the cultural and political differences in the society and explore their complexities (Burgess and Green, 2009).

Another aspect of the public sphere that social media redefines is the distinction between private individuals and public matters. Social media offers a new way of publicness that challenges the notions of the private sphere in contrast to the public sphere (Bruns and Highfield, 2016). It promotes personal publics, which are intensified by an individual's connection with other individuals that they engage in discussions with (Bruns and Highfield, 2016; Weller et al., 2013).

On Twitter, a user communicates with a tweet, and other individuals use their accounts to participate in the discussion. While many individuals can read the tweet, users can engage with the author of the tweet by sending a response to their tweets. The conversation between the two individuals is on a public domain and therefore is exposed to the public (Weller et al., 2013).

Using social media, private forms of production have been able to be part of the public life through user-generated content (Burgess and Green, 2009). Although social media is a medium of popular culture rather than a medium of political engagement, it has been argued that cultural practices can be a form of political participation as they are influenced by everyday life (Burgess and Green, 2009). This is evidential through cultural movements such as feminism and homosexuality that were primarily deemed as private matters but eventually became public and political issues (Fraser, 1990). While the concept of the public sphere acknowledges that not all discussions that take place are political, it is based on the premise that citizens should be able to influence political decisions that affect them (Dahlgren, 2005).

Such movements have also questioned what constitutes a public matter. (Habermas et al., 1974). This means that there needs to be a selection of issues which the public can have an opinion in and private matters which do not need public deliberation. The issues which fall into the private sphere have also been contested (Fraser, 1990). In the definition of the public sphere, Habermas states that individuals discuss issues of common concern. This might be problematic as not all individuals will be concerned about similar issues. For example, in earlier times issues of domestic violence were perceived to be private (Fraser, 1990). It was therefore essential for feminists to form a subaltern counter-public in which they can create their discourse around matters of domestic violence. In instigating such a conversation, it became a discussion with other public spheres and eventually became a widespread discussion. As a result, the issue of domestic violence became a common concern and interest (Fraser, 1990). Similarly, #RhodesMustFall became a public issue based on private experiences of social injustice and inequality that are linked to identity and history (Kros, 2015). In this sense, democratic publicity requires opportunities for minorities to be able to introduce new issues of concern that have not necessarily been perceived as common issues or public issues before (McKee, 2005).

Network Society

The network society theory was coined by Manuel Castells in 1996. The concept is based on how various structures of the society have transformed into an information society which is a term used to describe the significant impact of ICT's (Information and communications technology) on political, social and economic structures of society (Castells, 1996). In this manner, a network society encompasses changes in the economic, political and social structures of a society in which these structures are self-organised through an intense exchange of information. While information has always been an essential aspect of society, ICT's have dominated the manner in which communities are structured and organised. Economic, political and cultural structures are based on attaining information and generating new knowledge through intense communication (Castells, 2011b). Furthermore, while digital technologies have produced an information paradigm, they have not replaced old industrial structures; instead, they have integrated the structures and intensified the connection between them. As a result, contemporary society uses an organisational system based on a networking logic (Castells, 2015).

In his book, The Rise of the Network Society, Castells (2011) indicates that the organising and central component of the network society is information. While the development of the industrial society is based on machines and manual labour, contemporary society has emphasised the value of generating, processing and circulating new information as a source of production (Castells, 2011b; Webster, 2014). While the network society is largely dependent on information and the development of digital technology, it is mainly focused on the social relationships that are produced as an outcome these developments (Castells, 2015). Networking is achieved through communication in which individuals can share information and participate in meaning production through exchanging ideas. In this manner, the organisational system of the network society shifts the focus of interactions from communities to the networks formed within the society (Castells, 2015).

Digital communication technologies enable a global communicative system and provide decentralised and horizontal forms of communications. Communication is horizontal as the individual is in control of how the message is communicated and the message can be delivered across various platforms simultaneously (Castells, 1996; Castells, 2011b; Castells, 2015). From this perspective, the organisational system of the network society and the development of communications technology has altered power relations, as communication is no longer hierarchical and controlled by the interests of those who own media outlets (Castells, 2015).

Furthermore, digital technology has shaped how individuals experience everyday practices of the society which can form cultures (Gerbaudo, 2012). The network society promotes a culture of virtual reality expressed through new communication processes that are made up of new symbolic features (Castells, 2015). Castells defines virtual reality as "a system in which reality itself (that is, people's material/symbolic existence) is entirely captured, fully immersed in a virtual setting in the world of make believe, in which appearances are not just on the screen through which experience is communicated , but they become the experience" (Castells, 1996: p 404). For example, the symbol of a hashtag (#) had a social meaning before Twitter, but the meaning has been altered to symbolise a trending discussion that takes place online (Weller et al., 2013). As digital technology is easy to access, production and consumption of culture is no longer controlled by those in power but accessed by any individual that has access to digital technology (Castells, 2015).

The network society functions through a flow of information which is enabled by technology. The flow of information processed through the network society results in intense interactions and interactivity amongst individuals and institutions of the society (Castells, 2011b; Gerbaudo, 2012). Furthermore, networks are not bound to a specific location as communication is dominated by digital technology.

As the network society is dependent on information flows, the technology used to transmit the information becomes a "space of flows" (Castells, 2011b: 412). Castells (2011) defines space of flows as "the material organisation of time-sharing social practices that work through flows" (Castells, 2011b: 412). Digital technology has influenced how individuals experience space as they do not have to be in a specific geographical location to interact but rather, they connect through digital technology, which becomes their space of interaction (Castells, 2011b; Castells, 2011a).

Furthermore, instant access to production of content has provided immediacy to information that gives an illusion of live reporting of events (Gerbaudo, 2012). The Twitter tagline encourages users to tweet about current events happening around them (Weller et al., 2013). Additionally, digital technology provides flexibility that enables users to engage in multiple discussions with either a group of people or other individuals in different locations simultaneously (Castells, 2011b; Castells, 2015). This ability to simultaneously engage in various discussions across social media platforms gives an illusion of timelessness. Castells (2011) terms this illusion as "timeless time" which refers to the intense flow of information in the network society which is the elimination the sequential order of activities in a particular context (Castells, 2011b: 465). In this manner an individual can engage in personal and professional discussions or activities at the same time.

The two aspects discussed above, namely, timeless time and space of flows, have highly influenced communication dynamics in the society. Social media provides a platform that enables users to mass-communicate their grievances and construct their identities in a space that has limited restrictions (Castells, 2015; Gerbaudo, 2012). This has been beneficial specifically to social movements. From earlier times, social movements have been a vehicle for social change yet social media has changed how these movements are organised (Gerbaudo, 2012). The aim of social movements is not only to change institutional practices, but the values and interests of those in power legitimised through institutional practices. In this manner, those in power can control how individuals understand the society through values and interests imposed on institutional practices (Castells, 2015). While Castell's work is utilised in various studies in disciplines, the most relevant to the study is the link between the network society and social movements.

In most cases, social movements are based on a collective perception of unsatisfactory living conditions within a society which are controlled by higher authorities in a specific institution. They are also based on the emotions of citizens towards the current social order and their aim to alter it (Gerbaudo, 2012). The use of social media in contemporary social movements does not aim to dismiss movements that take place offline but rather compliment them. Evidence has shown that contemporary social movements are more likely to succeed if used in correlation with offline movements related to a geographical space such as streets and historical buildings (Gerbaudo, 2012; Castells, 2015).

In relation, counter-power is achieved through groups that challenge institutions. As networking is achieved through communication, social media has enabled individuals to share emotions such as anger and outrage which are common in protests (Castells, 2015). Digital communication has extended the capacity of communication to reach all social structures (Benkler, 2006). Networks have the power to disseminate ideas and information, and affords individuals with the opportunity to explore knowledge. As a result, the emphasis on meaning-making is through socialised communication. Networks of power form through ideologies that aim to legitimise power while networks of counter-power form through public opinion (Benkler, 2006).

In the network society, power to communicate is not central or in control of large corporations. Instead, individuals are in control of communicating systems through digital technology (Benkler, 2006). This gives users a sense of autonomy and freedom to communicate. Digital technology strengthens the conditions of civic engagement and democracy by encouraging an active and conscious civil society (Burgess and Green, 2009). Using social media, individuals are can easily communicate to large groups about social movements and can communicate about it to different parts of the world. Communication does not only reach local users but various parts of the world which can encourage a global public opinion as any user can participate in the discussion. Users do not only use social media platforms to communicate about social movements but also to mobilise other users through discussions (Castells, 2015).

Moreover, social media is beneficial as individuals can publish information, pictures or videos of the offline protest. Traditional media can be subject to control by elites and therefore not report the event or report it in a way that could be misleading (Gerbaudo, 2012). Twitter allows users to not only be involved in discussions and sharing of information but also enables users to be first-hand reporters of the event using a hashtag without any professional skills (Weller et al., 2013).

In online discussions, individuals share their grievances and experiences of the conditions in which they aim to alter. It is during these discussions that a strong emotional drive is created as individuals construct a shared and collective identity against what they are protesting. Emotions play a significant role in social movements and the actions of participants. Social movements are facilitated by negative emotions towards a social order (Castells, 2015). As individuals share emotions, these emotions can also mobilise individuals who share the same grievances and encourage other individuals to join in the movement to change their social conditions. Individuals also gain a sense of agency as they are collectively participating in discussions about something they oppose (Castells, 2015).

As a result, a possibility of change is established which creates a strong sense of hope among individuals (Castells, 2015). Through communication, there is also a sense of unity from the perception of a shared identity. This decreases emotions of fear of challenging authority as action is taken collectively (Castells, 2015). There are also elements of enthusiasm and empowerment, achieved by collective action of taking control (Gerbaudo, 2012). These emotions can form a network as networks are "programmed in each domain according to the interests and values of empowered actors" (Castells, 2015: 28).

Furthermore, the emotional atmosphere can set the atmosphere of the offline space where individuals gather. Mobilisation is an act of creating a public space in which individuals gather around with the purpose of challenging an issue. It involves individuals engaging in a plan of action and setting an agenda of collective action at a geographical location (Gerbaudo, 2012). This plan of action does not only constitute coordinating offline activities but is a process of constructing collective identity and emotions which can represent the overall mood of the movement. Gerbaudo (2012) terms this as the "choreography of assembly" which is the "a process of symbolic construction of public space which revolves around an emotional scene-setting and scripting" (Gerbaudo, 2012: 12).

The link between offline and online spaces during a protest creates a hybrid public space (Castells, 2015). Discussions that take place offline can also take place online simultaneously or through continuity as individuals can continue to discuss and protest online even after they have left the geographical location. This creates a networked hybrid public space which is a combination of a space of flows and a space of places. This space is constituted by the freedom of expression and different ways to mobilise that the internet provides, and the collective action of challenging an institution that takes place offline (Castells, 2015). Castells (2015) also observed that individuals are most likely to occupy a symbolic public space that may have historical significance. By occupying such a space, a connection between the present movement and the historical context is created, as observed in the Occupy Wall Street movement (Castells, 2015). For example, during #RhodesMustFall individuals targeted a statue with historical significance and through the protests it was contrasted with the current democratic society (Kros, 2015).

To conclude, contemporary protests can be a demonstration of a networked society. While occupying an offline space provides significant results, the space provided by social media is just as essential in contemporary movements. Twitter has become a co-ordinating tool of protests through its immediacy to current information and the use of hashtags as a centralised space for discussion. They also can mobilise a wider and diverse group of people. As it has little regulation, the freedom of expression that users experience offline is different to the one experienced online. Individuals can freely challenge discourses and institutions anonymously online (Castells, 2015; Gerbaudo, 2012).

In this manner, social media activism demonstrates a networked form of organising social protests (Gerbaudo, 2012). Networks are formed amongst individuals who share the same interests or goals (Lim, 2012). As these individuals share common goals and interests, collective action is encouraged (Gerbaudo, 2012). In this manner, a participatory culture is also promoted.

Participatory Culture

The concept of participation has been largely contested and employed across various disciplines. Participatory culture is concerned with the manner that information and communications technology have encouraged participation in the society (Jenkins et al., 2009). As a theory, participatory culture was developed relatively recently and focuses on internet consumer culture, while participatory democracy has political connotations that are related to the #RhodesMustFall movement (Fuchs, 2017). To contextualise Jenkins' theory, participatory democracy will also be outlined in this section then linked to participatory culture. As #RhodesMustFall is a movement that practised democracy through the internet, participatory democracy is a suitable theory to link with participatory culture.

In discussing participatory culture, Fuchs argues that that the theory does not cover all dimensions of political events. Fuchs lists the various dimensions that participatory culture does not include when it comes to political events. The most relevant to this study are the intense practice of democracy from all aspects of society at a grassroot level and "participatory decision-making" (Fuchs, 2017: 55). These dimensions will be further explored below.

Participatory democracy is conceptualised as the act of equally taking part in decision-making processes in society through discussion and interaction. While this concept mainly focuses on political participation, it also acknowledges that participation in non-governmental institutions may be beneficial to political efficacy (Pateman, 1970). This is to encourage participation in the society as a whole. Individuals are encouraged to participate in other areas of the society when participation is practised from a grassroot level. By enabling participation in alternative areas of the society, an individual can exercise participation more frequently and may be able to better understand the connection between private and public spheres (Pateman, 1970). Furthermore, the theory holds that individuals should feel independent enough to voice out their opinions without being influenced by another individual.

An individual is empowered to participate when they feel that their opinion in discussions matter and will be beneficial to them as much as it will be beneficial to the society as a whole (Pateman, 1970). This can result in increased participation from individuals and lead them to have a better sense of agency and control over

their own lives. Individuals are also able to participate better when they feel a sense of belonging in the society; this is achieved through having access and being included in discussions (Dahlgren, 2005).

Participation aims to avoid decisions made by higher authority that do not comprehend the individual's need or may not benefit the individual. Although it is not possible to make decisions that will satisfy each individual, the participatory process also aims to educate the individual about the decision that will eventually be made (Pateman, 1970). During the participatory process an individual gains knowledge and perspective from other individuals' experiences. In this manner, it also becomes a learning process. It is also in this sense that the private and public spheres become linked as private experiences and thoughts enter the public sphere (Pateman, 1970).

The core principles of the participatory democracy theory have been highlighted above. Although the theory was developed before social media became popular, the core principles may still apply. To better understand the participation that takes place on social media the participatory culture theory will be employed as it is more relevant.

Henry Jenkins (2013) noted that low barriers to digital technologies have empowered individuals to express themselves easily and participate in civic cultures through user-generated content. Participatory culture is fostered by the transformation of communication structures that enable users to produce and circulate media content around the society (Jenkins, 2013). Digital technology along with the internet has provided a space where users can engage under different social contexts. The theory holds that the link between easy access to digital technology and the easy production of user-generated content invites users to actively participate in the production and circulation of content (Burgess and Green, 2009). In this context, "user" is a term used to describe individuals who are active internet participants.

Henceforth, circulating information is also a form of participation as users are actively involved in creating, sharing and circulating information (Jenkins et al., 2009). As a result, social media users are both producers and consumers of texts which has led to the term "prosumers" being prevalent in the discourse of internet usage (Van Djick, 2009: 41). The term is used to describe the convergence between the categories of producers and consumers which has become hybrid (Jenkins et al., 2009).

Since the internet has become a space of communication that is relevant to the everyday life in various domains of the society (Carpentier, 2011), publishing user-generated content has become an act of participating in the public life. The platform has enabled users to actively participate in meaning-making processes through the creation of content and become sources of meaning production. As a result, social media has been highly praised for being a platform that has promoted a participatory culture (Jenkins et al., 2009). There are three aspects which encourage participation on social media: low cost of participation, a promotion of collective identity, and online communities (Kelly Garrett, 2006).

Additionally, social media has introduced various ways in which individuals can participate in public discussions. Participation is recognised in spaces that enable dialogue, engagement and the forming of communities through shared identities (Burgess and Green, 2009). Social media communities allow individuals to engage with each other through shared interests and experiences. By interacting with individuals who share the same interests, users are encouraged to participate as they are engaging in topics that are relevant to them. In this manner, individuals interact with the world as members of a community (Gonzalez-Lizarraga et al., 2016). Through interaction with other communities, individuals are exposed to cultural differences and have the opportunity to represent their identity and the way in which they view the world. While individuals can encounter each other when engaging in the same issues, particularly hashtags, this does not necessarily mean they hold the same views about the issue (Weller et al., 2013).

A participatory culture entails that individuals do not have to make use of traditional media to discuss events or issues that are relevant to them (Burgess and Green, 2009). In November 2009, Twitter changed its tagline (where users can enter their tweet) from "What are you doing" to "What's happening" (Weller et al., 2013: 1). This encouraged users to reduce egocentric tweets and increase information sharing tweets of what is happening around them, which could be considered as news. The tagline also provided users with a sense

of agency as they can directly share their own experiences of reality with a vast number of people (Burgess and Green, 2009). In this manner, the tagline encourages users to share content that is most relevant to them at the time.

Traditional media such as television and print media do not necessarily invite users to interact with the content published or engage in a continuous conversation about the content (Jenkins, 2013). In contrast, Twitter enables individuals to create and interact with the content by retweeting or commenting on the content itself. Other users can also comment on the content published or comment on a comment made by another user, therefore creating an illusion of a conversation (Weller et al., 2013). This results in an active discursive space which is a desirable trait for participation (Storck, 2011). It also creates an environment where freedom of expression is encouraged as there is little regulation of content on social media.

In South Africa, the youth has been categorised as a "lost generation" (Costera-Meijer, 2013). In a report compiled by Malila (2013) findings show that youth have low interest in political engagement. It was also evident that the youth felt that they lacked agency to participate or influence political activities. The study also revealed that the youth felt issues reported in traditional media were not relevant to them (Costera-Meijer, 2013). In contrast, social media enables individuals to participate in topics that have not been easy to discuss through traditional media due to censorship (Burgess and Green, 2009).

Users on Twitter can customise the content that they view and participate in freely which results in an increased sense of agency. By engaging with other individuals who share the same interests and concerns, users are encouraged to discuss and gain knowledge about issues that are relevant to them (Weller et al., 2013). This allows for social boundaries to be challenged as users engage with identity practices of everyday life and participate in issues of identity politics. Through online participation, youth can gain access to knowledge and discussions that are relevant to them which may increase participation in political matters such as #RhodesMustFall.

As emphasised above, participation is achieved through active participants in a discursive space as it encourages an awareness of knowledge, opinions and experiences along with a healthy democracy. (Storck, 2011) .Participation can only take place in conditions where freedom of expression is encouraged, and the unrestrictive nature of social media enables this trait (Burgess and Green, 2009). Individuals should also feel that their opinions are valued to feel more empowered to engage with the world around them. Participation also becomes more significant when it promotes a particular society or community (Jenkins, 2013; Jenkins and Carpentier, 2013).

While social media enables a participatory culture, it does not guarantee that the principles will exist as it consists of a large number of users and communication dynamics play a role and inequalities may still exist (Burgess and Green, 2009). On Twitter, users with fewer amounts of followers are less likely to be recognised. As information on Twitter is circulated via retweets, their opinions are also less likely to be encountered in comparison to users with a high number of followers. It is evident that having access to social media platforms does not necessarily guarantee interaction with other users or that an individual's opinion on a matter will be recognised (Weller et al., 2013).

While the use of Twitter hashtags provides an opportunity for users to post their tweets to a broader audience, it can create an illusion of communicating to a broad audience but cannot determine that the content will be read. This illusion can enable individuals to feel that they are participating in society but do not have any real power in the discussion (Jenkins and Carpentier, 2013). This is a limitation of social media and participatory culture as those who express themselves and get a large number of retweets are perceived to have a higher value of participation. The aspect of listening or in the case of social media, reading or viewing has been deemed to be an essential aspect of participation because in any discussion, there must be an audience listening when an individual is speaking (Weller et al., 2013). The theory of participatory culture emphasises an active audience that participates through user-generated content and less on those who merely view the content. Although, through exposure to content, an individual is most likely to form an opinion about which is also be considered as participation (Burgess and Green, 2009).

The participation theory will contribute to this study by enabling understanding of the manner in which users participated in the #RhodesMustFall movement on Twitter. As mentioned above, one of the aspects of the internet that is linked to participation is collective identity which is a perception among individuals that they are part of a larger group as they share the same grievances and therefore, belong to the same online communities (Kelly Garrett, 2006). Collective identity can only be achieved through strong communication and communication channels (Lim, 2012). It is also relevant it is the participation in the hashtag which allowed users to mass-communicate. This concept is also essential to understanding the kind of opinions expressed in the participation of the hashtag.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Methodology refers to the strategical decisions which guide how research is conducted (Ritchie et al., 2013). While social movements have a historical base and have been occurring in societies for many years, the use of social media platforms for social movements is relatively recent. In particular, the association of Twitter with social movements has been a common occurrence which has presented a need for this study (Papacharissi, 2012). Research conducted on the internet has been a growing phenomenon and has also been widely debated. Several researchers have approached internet research using new and traditional methods (Consalvo and Ess, 2011; Haythornthwaite and Wellman, 2002; Hine, 2005; Sade-Beck, 2004). While most research conducted on Twitter employs quantitative methods, this study will use qualitative methods to collect and analyse the data. A critical discourse analysis will be employed to analyse texts posted on Twitter during #RhodesMustFall from 9 March 2015 – 9 April 2015. Additionally, a semiotic analysis will be utilised to analyse how the movement was visually represented through images and memes under the hashtag. Critical discourse analysis and semiotic analysis methods both have a theoretical background, but for the purpose of this study they will only be used as methods. The aim of this chapter is to outline the methodological framework that has guided this study with consideration to the above mentioned theoretical frameworks.

Methodological Framework

There are several ways in which the world can be perceived and understood. As a result, researchers have the responsibility to select a research approach that is most suitable for their study (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008b). In order to explore #RhodesMustFall as a movement on Twitter, a qualitative research approach will be employed. Due to its ontological assumptions, which perceive reality to be socially constructed, the research approach aims to explore behaviour, experiences, perceptions and feelings of participants (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008a). For this reason, the phenomena cannot be explained using experiments or measurements which are quantitative methods. Tweets are presented as text and therefore, this study will be conducting a textual analysis using critical discourse analysis.

Furthermore, qualitative research is concerned with the manner in which participant's view social experiences and how meaning is produced from the experiences. Although this research will not be focusing on Twitter participants but rather, the content that they produce. In this view, meaning is an important aspect of human nature, and therefore each action contains meaning (Krauss, 2005). As perception differs per individual, this approach also emphasises the existence of multiple realities and dismisses the notion of a single true reality (Krauss, 2005). Thus, I will analyse how tweets were used to construct meaning during #RhodesMustFall. By studying the relevant tweets, I can analyse the perception and the meaning that is produced by participants in connection to that event (Weller et al., 2013).

While exploring meaning making processes, particularly on Twitter, the appropriation of technology in the society can also be put into context (Weller et al., 2013). This is also relevant to the use of hashtags which function as a discursive space and the meaning produced by participants in making use of them during events. In addition, the researcher does not approach participants as subjects but as individuals who enable the researcher to explore the context of their reality. In relation to this research, tweets will be used to explore the constructed reality of #RhodesMustFall. As a result, the study conducted becomes a collective effort from both the researcher and the participants (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008a). In this case, the study is a collective effort from the researcher and the tweets.

Caja Thimm et al (2014) state that through qualitative methods, data can "reveal much about social norms, appropriateness or larger social concerns about technology" (Thimm et al., 2014: 100). In relation to this study, the large use of Twitter globally and locally has enabled the platform to contain rich data that can be used for research purposes (Thimm et al., 2014). The dynamic interactions and the systematic use of tweets and hashtags has presented an online culture in discussing issues and therefore provides researchers with valuable information (Marwick, 2014). While quantitative studies are useful in calculating the volume of users participating in certain discussion and measuring the interaction between users during discussions, they are limited in describing the contents and dynamics of the activities that occur on Twitter (Thimm et al., 2014).

As Twitter is a global platform which accommodates users with different experiences and perceptions, findings of one hashtag may be similar but also may not apply to another (Marwick, 2014).

While qualitative research acknowledges both the presence of the researcher and participants, it also acknowledges that the researcher may have their own perceptions, values and beliefs (Ritchie et al., 2013). This is to say that these aspects may not be completely separated from the research. This is not to suggest bias but rather recommends that the researcher should be reflective of their position in the study as they are also an important part of the research (Ritchie et al., 2013).

Although, to avoid bias, qualitative research is also inductive in nature as themes and patterns in the study determine the research results and conclusion (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008a). The study is also grounded into certain knowledge and ideas through the selection of theoretical frameworks which guide the study (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008a).

Qualitative research also suggests that the researcher should immerse themselves into the social setting of the research and the participants (Ritchie et al., 2013). This entails understanding and being familiar with their social setting. By understanding the context of the social setting the researcher can understand the participant's perceptions and culture. Considering the context also enables the researcher to locate it within a broader framework of society (Ritchie et al., 2013). In this research, the political and historical context of #RhodesMustFall will be considered.

As data will be collected on the Twitter website, the researcher will have the opportunity to engage with the system of the platform itself (Rogers, 2014). The use of hashtags on Twitter is beneficial in understanding context as it functions as a way for a user to link their text to a specific topic (Rogers, 2014). Therefore, the researcher is able to link texts to specific contexts. This will be helpful particularly in understanding how Twitter enables online participation as the researcher will gain knowledge by using the functions of the website. Engaging with the website itself will allow the researcher to gain insight of Twitter as a social setting and the manner in which it may redefine the public sphere.

Qualitative methods can be utilised to describe behavior and social dynamics that take place between users on the platform (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008b). This can be done through a thick description which entails a rich and thorough description and interpretation of the phenomena being studied (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008b). The method below will be employed to achieve a thick description.

Research design

Hermeneutic phenomenological research

Hermeneutics and phenomenology are separate methods which have been combined into hermeneutics phenomenology. This type of research is concerned with exploring a phenomenon and the meanings associated with it (Kafle, 2013). This method of research aims to provide rich understanding and eventually a rich and thick description of the phenomena under study (Kisiel, 2014). This can be achieved by focusing on the perception and experiences of individuals or groups and the way that they construct meaning through those experiences (Kisiel, 2014). In this study, the tweets will be used to analyse how individuals experienced the #RhodesMustFall. It also seeks to understand the essence of the phenomenon along with the underlying meanings that are affiliated with it (Kisiel, 2014). In relation to this research, phenomenology is concerned with the manner that users utilise Twitter as a tool to engage in and social movements and to produce meanings.

On the other hand, the hermeneutics aspect of this method focuses on texts and the interpretation of texts (Kafle, 2013). Twitter is made up of a large number of texts (tweets), therefore several textual methodological tool are appropriate for researching the platform (Weller et al., 2014). Texts can represent certain discourses and those discourses are able to resemble certain experiences. This aspect believes that experiences can be interpreted and that description is equally part of the interpretation process (Kafle, 2013). Through description, the method brings awareness to the research process and considers the research experience of the researcher. The method views interpretation as a process that brings experiences to life through descriptive language. Different aspects of the experiences can also be illuminated through the discourse used to describe the phenomenon (Ricoeur, 1975). In this case, the above theoretical frameworks will be used to illuminate certain aspects of the #RhodesMustFall movement on Twitter.

Hermeneutics is a method of interpretation that requires the researcher to be reflective. The intention of this process is not to produce a duplication of the texts but rather to explore them and the reality that they represent (Ricoeur, 1975). This will be done through a critical discourse analysis which will be further explained below. Hermeneutics phenomenology is created through subjective experiences and perspectives including those of the researcher during the research process (Kafle, 2013). There are no fixed methods in conducting this type of research, only the requirements of rigorous interpretation and reflective writing (Kafle, 2013).

Data Sampling

Decisions concerning the criteria of the sample are often considered early in the research design in association with the research objectives (Ritchie et al., 2013: 50). Qualitative research commonly does not make use of non-probability sampling, as such sampling usually aims to be statistically representative and is large (Ritchie et al., 2013: 78). Quantitative data collection methods can take advantage of Twitter research in terms of large data but can be restricted in what they can explain (Weller et al., 2014). On the other hand, qualitative sample sizes are generally smaller as they require a deep analysis and large sampling may eventually result in repetition of information derived (Ritchie et al., 2013: 83). For this reason, once the sample units begin to reflect the same evidence, analysis will be focused on the data that have already been analysed.

Rather, for the intentions of this study, purposive sampling will be operated. Purposive sampling aims to use sample units that are selected based on specific features and traits which enable the researcher to thoroughly explore and gain understanding of the phenomena under study. The aim of this is "to ensure that all the key constituencies of relevance to the subject matter are covered" (Ritchie et al., 2013: 79). It should be noteworthy that purposive sampling does not aim to suggest any bias in the research but instead aims to achieve consistency within the sample (Ritchie et al., 2013). Although purposive sampling seeks to find sample units with specific characteristics, diversity within the sample is essential in order to ensure that all influencing factors are considered (Ritchie et al., 2013: 89).

To successfully achieve the research objectives which aim to explore how social media constructs a networked public sphere through participatory culture, only texts that are relevant to #RhodesMustFall will

be collected. The texts should also be relevant to the theoretical frameworks, namely, the public sphere, network society and participatory culture to explore what Twitter functions enabled a participatory culture and the construction of a networked public. Under the hashtag, only the texts written in English will be collected as the researcher may not be able to understand texts that are written in other languages.

Data collection

Using Twitter as a source of data was motivated by the objective to understand the communication dynamics that have been presented in discussions on the platform. Furthermore, the relationship between Twitter and social movements has become a topic of interest as it has been associated with earlier events that took place in countries such as Egypt.

Collecting data, whether directly through the search API (Application Programming Interface) or by using a software package, is one of the most challenging aspects of Twitter-based research" (Weller et al., 2014: 55). Relevant chapter in the book, *Twitter and Society*, list various tools and websites in which one may use to collect data (Weller et al., 2014). Unfortunately, some of the websites no longer exist and others are not useful in collecting historical data as this research was conducted one year later from the event (Weller et al., 2014). Furthermore, other websites required a certain fee which was a limitation to this research. A useful way of refining the sample of tweets is through hashtags. "Tracking tweets that contain a certain hashtag is a way to establish a dataset of the most visible tweets relating to the event in question" (Weller et al., 2014: 100). This can also present a limitation as not every tweet that is related to the event will contain the hashtag.

As a result, data was collected from the Twitter website (www.Twitter.com), under the hashtag #RhodesMustFall. Using the advanced search option, the search was narrowed to the dates of 9 March 2015 to 9 April 2015 as those are the dates between when the movement started and when the statue was eventually removed. The data that is collected from Twitter is already in the public domain, therefore a gatekeeper's letter was not necessary to conduct this research. In order to archive the data, the tweets were copied and pasted into a document as it was an easier way to collect data. The images under the hashtag were also saved.

Data analysis

Critical Discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis is motivated by the aim to understand social issues, particularly in how language is used as a tool to empower and transmit knowledge and beliefs (Mogashoa, 2014: 100). It is also a tool used to study interactions that are in a linguistic form (Mogashoa, 2014). The understanding of these interactions may not be clear at first but when put in a broader social context they become easier to understand (Mogashoa, 2014). Thus, critical discourse analysis also functions as a tool to discover and understand underlying discourses that shape social structures and practices. Social practices such as social media activism are ways of "socially interacting – ways of people to act practically in the production of social life, in work, in play, in their homes and so forth" (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999: 38). Nevertheless, texts are one way of participating within the discourse of a social practice. Texts play a large role in public dialogue and social relations and have the ability to influence public opinion and mass communication (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999: 53).

Furthermore, discourse is an important aspect of the society which individuals are not always aware of. It is important for individuals to be aware of the discourses that dominate society as the discourses can frame their reality (Fairclough, 2003). In addition, discourse stems from various moments in the society. In the book, Discourse in Late Modernity, Fairclough lists various ways which discourse can form in the society with reference to Harvey (1996) (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999). Discourse can take form in the following aspects: through language, through power, social relations, institutional practices and finally, through belief systems (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999). This is to suggest the need for a critical discourse analysis in this study, as the presence discourse can influence various structures of the society that are pivotal to its system (Fairclough, 2003). Discourse can also form through transformation as it is constantly evolving through society and society evolves through discourse (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999).

Structural transformations that occur in the society often trigger cultural transformation such as the appropriation of technology in the process (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999). Unfortunately, transformations in the society may be in the interest of specific groups while being a disadvantage to others.

Luckily, groups that are disadvantaged by the system can challenge the system to also enforce transformation that benefits them (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999). Transformations in the society do not only influence pivotal structures but the prevalent language being used and eventually, the discourse (Fairclough, 2003). In relation to the study, the initial purpose of Twitter was not intended to for the use of communicating social movements (Valenzuela, 2013). This occurred through transformation and the appropriation of technology by marginalised groups.

As mentioned above, this tool of analysis is also concerned with interactions. Interactions can be constructed according to discourse through communicative principles that constitute the manner in which individuals contribute and interpret the contribution of others in discursive practices (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999: 55). This relates to the theory of participatory culture which is concerned with the dynamics that enable individuals to participate in discussions. This is to say, the systems in which participants use to interact is also part of the discourse (Fairclough, 2003). Through this analysis, the researcher can study the character that the author constructs through text and the role that they aim to play. For example, Papacharissi conducted research on Twitter using discourse analysis to analyse the strategies that users use in texts in a performative manner to portray themselves (Papacharissi, 2012). In this view, participants present themselves as social actors using discursive practices. Theo van Leeuwen (2009) refers to individuals as social actors, rather than participants to represent the roles they play in texts (Van Leeuwen, 2009: 23).

Interpretation plays a large role in discourse even though the receiver may not always interpret the text according to how the author intended it to be interpreted. The role that interpretation plays in discourse can shape the participation of individuals and how they contribute to the discussion. In this manner, critical discourse analysis questions the dynamics, along with the enablers and barriers of interactions (Fairclough, 2003).

Thus, the text can be open to several interpretations, but the process of interpretation becomes reflexive as it is influenced by the individual's perception. This is not the only aspect that can influence the interpretation of the text. The social position and ideology of the text can also influence how it is interpreted (Fairclough, 2003). This is to demonstrate that interpretation is complex and can be influenced by various aspects. It is important to note that the explanation and understanding of a text are different but both crucial elements of

the interpretation process (Fairclough, 2003). Additionally, while critical discourse analysis does not have a universal guidance to achieve a certain understanding of a text, the theoretical perspectives used in the study give guidance (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999: 67).

As this method is multidisciplinary, it is evident that it incorporates similar elements to those of semiotics which will be discussed in more detail below. Semiotics is based on the aspect of meaning making which is also determined by the process of interpretation (Fairclough, 2003). While semiotics analyses visuals, critical discourse analysis views any social practices to be inclusive of semiotic elements (Fairclough, 2003). Papacharissi states that "it is intriguing that digitally literate behaviours on Twitter require reversal of grammatical and syntactical norms that typify literacy offline" (Papacharissi, 2012: 2001). This relates to the interpretation aspect of this analysis as the texts found on Twitter do not necessarily follow literacy norms. It is in this manner that the researcher should consider the social practice of tweeting to interpret the text (Fairclough, 2003). Although online communication is at a disadvantage because users do not share the same environment and context, social cues such as body language are absent from the interactions (Papacharissi, 2012). Such social cues can be replaced by other cues such as emoji's to enhance communication. This may influence but also increase the understanding of the whole discourse (Papacharissi, 2012).

It should also be noted that context gives rise to meaning. This can be a challenge as there is a difference of context between the sending and receiving of texts as both participants are experiencing the text from different environments (Fairclough, 2003). In this case, the researcher will experience the text from an academic view, but the individuals who sent the tweets during the movement may have experienced the texts from a social view. Social practices, beliefs and systems are represented in discursive practices and therefore are also present in systems of communication (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999).

While representations are part of the communication system, it should also be noted that they have the potential to be vehicles of ideologies. Even though it is usually perceived as arbitrary, language is representative of meaning and has implications in certain contexts (Mogashoa, 2014).

Although discourse in society contains all the above mentioned elements, it is also dependent on other non – discursive practices to fulfil its moments (Fairclough, 2003). For example, the network society depends on several corresponding practices, rather than texts in order to prevail (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999).

To conclude, critical discourse analysis problematises discourse by investigating social practices that are represented by texts (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999: 60). To establish the context, critical discourse analysis aims to examine the social setting of the discussion at hand. This can be done by locating the discourse which entails interpreting the social practices that are associated with it. This also functions as a tool to locate the associated social practice in the context of wider social structures (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999). Additionally, while critical discourse analysis does not have a universal guide to achieve a certain understanding of a text, the theoretical perspectives used in the study can give guidance (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999: 67). The method requires the researcher to code and place the texts into themes. The theoretical frameworks can also guide the themes as a tool for the researcher to link the texts to the study. In the study conducted by Papacharissi (2012), the texts were placed into themes according to the theoretical frameworks which enabled the researcher to analyse the data according to the study (Papacharissi, 2012).

Semiotic Analysis

A basic semiotic analysis will be conducted to analyse the images and memes posted on Twitter under the hashtag from 9 March 2015 to 9 April 2015. Semiotics is defined as the "the study of signs" (Chandler, 2007: 1) in which the sign is the basic unit of analysis. This method is concerned with anything that can be considered as a sign. This includes everything that aims to be representative of something else (Chandler, 2007). While semiology is a theory, it "offers a very full box of analytical tools for taking an image apart and tracing how it works in relation to broader systems of meaning" (Rose, 2016: 106). Semiotics is applicable as both a theory and a method. Although, for this research, it will only be used for methodological purposes.

Daniel Chandler (2007) indicates that society tends to be negatively biased towards digital representations. Analogue photography is perceived to be natural and therefore more authentic while digital photography is perceived to be artificial.

Modern technological developments have integrated digital cameras into mobile phones (Liu et al., 2008). Mobile phones provide instant access to photographic tools and photo sharing platforms (Liu et al., 2008). The authenticity of Twitter hashtag movements has been questioned by authors such as Evgeny Morozov (2012) who cautions against the effects of digital technology on political movements. Granted, visual materials can increase the authenticity as they portray the realities of movements through photographic evidence (Rose, 2016).

Although, Roland Barthes (1997) argues against the perception of photographs as a representation of reality. Barthes argues that photographs contain a "meaning without a code" (Barthes, 1997: 278). Photographers do not need to include codes that will guide the reader to the element of reality within a photograph as it is already presented. Therefore, photographs appear to be naturally denotative rather than connotative. However, Barthes (1997) explains that photographs are actually connotative in nature because aspects such as lighting and angles are taken into consideration before a photograph is taken. As these aspects are encoded into the photograph, photographs become connotative (Barthes, 1997). These terms have been used to support the above argument but will be further explained in the discussion below.

Semiotics is mainly concerned with how individuals construct meaning from signs. Therefore several theorists have classified and studied the role of signs in the society. A critical interpretation of signs can reveal the dominant and the marginalised ideologies in what they aim to represent (Barthes, 1977). Although this research only uses semiotics for methodological purposes, the theory will be briefly explained below.

Ferdinand De Saussure (1916) studied signs from a linguistic perspective. Saussure classified signs according to two levels, the signifier and the signified which make up the two components of a sign. The signifier refers to the concept while the signified refers to the "sound-image" (Saussure, 1916: 66). In this manner, the signifier is a concept, such as a word and the signified is the mental image that is associated with the concept. Accordingly, "signification" refers to the relationship between the signifier and the signified (Barthes, 1977: 48). From this perspective, the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary (Saussure, 1916: 67). For example, there is no clear between written words and the mental concepts in which they refer to.

Charles Sanders Peirce (1931) further developed this idea by providing a triadic model. Peirce states that signs operate through representation which mediates how the sign interpreted by reference to an object (Hartshorne and Weiss, 1931). There are three types of signs referred to in the triadic model. Firstly, symbolic signs which are arbitrary in nature and do not resemble what they signify. The connection that links symbolic signs to the signified is based on rationality and codes and conventions. On the other hand, indexical signs depend on similarities of what they aim to represent (Hartshorne and Weiss, 1931).

In addition, Umberto Eco (1981) explains how signs are interpreted. Denotation refers to the first degree of signification. Therefore, denotation is the direct reference to an object on a truth value (Eco, 1987: 550). Correspondingly, connotation refers to the second degree of signification. Connotation directly relates to the denotated sign and its intention. For this purpose, connotation is the advanced meaning of a sign (Eco, 1987: 549). Furthermore, Stuart Hall studied the structure of texts which can also explain the structure of a sign as a form of communication (Hall, 1973). From Hall's perspective, signs contain codes which are based on a broader meaning of social and cultural contexts. This encompasses the production, circulation, consumption and reproduction of a sign as a process (Hall, 1973: 163). He states that "the object of these practices is meanings and messages in the format of a sign-vehicles of a specific kind organised, like any form of communication or language through the operation of codes within the syntagmatic chain of discourse" (Hall, 1973: 163).

Therefore, production and consumption of signs take form within social relations and practices. In this manner, the producer of a sign includes an encoded meaning which refers to the intended or unintended use of codes to construct meaning. Whereas, decoding refers to how the reader interprets the codes to assign meaning to the image (Hall, 1973). The reader may interpret the sign differently from how the producer encoded it which means there can be a disconnection between the encoding and decoding of the sign. However, the reader can also interpret the sign in the manner which the producer intended for it to be read which produces a dominant reading (Hall, 1973: 169). Despite this, the reader may also share an understanding of the encoded message but choose to decode it according to their own position which produces a negotiated meaning. On the contrary, the reader may resist the preferred reading because of their position and interpret it differently to produce a counter-reading (Hall, 1973).

Semiotics is also concerned with how meaning and reality are represented through signs. Chandler states that "the meaning of a sign is not in its relationship to other signs within the language system but rather in the social context of its use" (Chandler, 2007: 9). Meaning is constructed through codes and conventions which can differ according to the society. Individuals may use these codes and conventions to construct meaning but most likely may not be aware of using them as they can seem natural (Hall, 1973). Ferdinand de Saussure conceptualises this as the Langue which "refers to the system of rules and conventions which is independent of and pre-exists, individuals' users" (Chandler, 2007: 8). Meaning can also be constructed through individuals unconsciously linking signs to common systems of conventions. The meaning of the sign is not embedded within the actual sign but resonates with the interpreter (Rose, 2016). Accordingly, the presence of the interpreter should be acknowledged as it plays a part in how the image is interpreted (Rose, 2016).

Naturally, digital images are very similar to the reality that they wish to portray. Chandler warns that "Pictures resemble what they represent only in some aspects" (Chandler, 2007: 39). While pictures resemble reality, they only represent some aspects of it as they can be manipulated through lighting and other aspects of photography. As explained above, indexical signs depend on a connection to the signified by virtue of implication (Bricteux, 2016). For example, an image of what is happening at the movement implies an individual's participation in the movement. Additionally, while photographs are generally iconic, they can also be categorised as indexical. They are indexical because they illustrate the presence of a certain reality. They are also iconic as they have a resemblance to that certain reality (Bricteux, 2016).

As both photographs and memes will be analysed, the terms photograph and images will be used interchangeably. Images posted on social media sometimes contain captions which can prioritise certain information about the image (Rose, 2016). Social media platforms such as Twitter provide easy photo-sharing tools.

Henry Jenkins (2013) refers to process of posting and sharing content on social media as "spreadable media". He explains that "in this emerging model, audiences play an active role in "spreading" rather than serving as passive carriers of viral media: their choices, investments agendas and actions determine who gets valued" (Jenkins et al., 2013: 21). In this manner, users have the agency to actively contribute to the visual representations of the movement. As social media is embedded into everyday practices, users can visually interact with content through sharing or retweeting images

As cameras and photo sharing platforms have been integrated into mobile phones, posting images online has been a dominant practice in social movements (Liu et al., 2008). Camera phones enable individuals to readily have the technology to capture photographs that are relevant to the movement in real time. Sharing photos during movements is deemed newsworthy and informative (Liu et al., 2008). "A picture is worth a thousand words" is a common saying which implies that a photograph communicates meaning beyond words can describe. This is particularly relevant to Twitter as it only allows users to share texts that contain 140 characters (Liu et al., 2008). Image sharing can be useful to visually convey deeper meanings about the movement. This has resulted in a visual culture in which Rose suggests that it involves the manner in which social practices develop through ideas and perceptions (Rose, 2016). To analyse digital images, it should be important to note that social media platforms have their own codes and conventions which can shape how the image is distributed and the context in which it is interpreted (Rose, 2016). The steps that have been taken to analyse the image are attached to the semiotic guide with consideration to the above discussion.

Limitations and ethical Issues

The main limitation of this research is that it is a desktop study and there were no interviews or focus groups conducted about the research. Interviews and focus groups would have produced more data for he research but due to the time constraints, this was not possible. The study also faced challenges in the collection of data as historical data is not easily accessible. Necessary software's such as Gnip are available and can produce the relevant data but the data would need to be purchased (Weller et al., 2014). In addition, there were challenges in defining the sample size. It is not possible to determine the number of tweets under a historical hashtag, therefore it was not possible to determine the exact sample size (Weller et al., 2014). As the researcher did not make any personal contact for the purpose of this research, there were no apparent ethical issues for this research.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter aims to analyse data that emerged from the #RhodesMustFall hashtag on Twitter from 9 March 2015 to 9 April 2015. The purpose of this chapter is to explore how social media has enabled a participatory culture and redefined the public sphere. Additionally, it also aims to explore the relationship between social media movements and the network society. Two research analysis methods have been employed to analyse the data, although only the basic elements of each method are used. Critical discourse analysis will be used to analyse the tweets that materialised as texts and a semiotic analysis will be employed to analyse the visual data. Furthermore, the theoretical frameworks outlined and discussed in chapter 3 will be used to explore the data. Namely, the public sphere, participatory culture and the network society.

Redefining the public sphere on Twitter

Hashtags

Hashtags can be found on Twitter under "trending topics" which is a list of topics that contain a high volume of tweets at that time and are presented as hashtags. Accordingly, hashtags function as an issue public which is characterised by individuals gathering to discuss a specific topic (Weller et al., 2013). In this manner, hashtags act as a public space for private individuals to gather and discuss common concerns about the movement. Twitter has been regarded as a public space as it has redefined the manner in which individuals gather to discuss issues of concern. As discussed in the previous chapter, the term "public" entails a sense of accessibility and openness to discussions (Habermas, 1991). Thus, individuals who use Twitter as part of their daily lives can easily access discussions that are relevant to them.

Therefore, the #RhodesMustFall hashtag functions a vehicle to access a public debate and to receive information about the movement (Weller et al., 2013).

During the movement several hashtags were introduced under the main #RhodesMustFall hashtag. Hashtags such as #RhodesSoWhite #transformUCT #UCT #Transformation #BlackMonday and #RhodesUniversity were embedded in the discussion under #RhodesMustFall. Although there were other hashtags, the hashtags listed above were used frequently and are more relevant to the study. The following user has appropriated one of the hashtags listed above. The hashtag was first introduced on 18 March in which the tweet in discussion received the most retweets from the other tweets that contained the hashtag.

@IamMakhombothi: Let's take #RhodesMustFall #RhodesSoWhite beyond just statues, to a higher order discussion about transformation. @WitsSRC @SASCO_Jikelele (18/03/2015)

Gerbaudo (2012) states that hashtags enable users to personalise and participate in issues of interest. In the mentioned tweet, @IamMakhombhoti has linked the hashtags #RhodesMustFall and #RhodesSoWhite to the issue of transformation. In the tweet, the user has ranked the issue of transformation as a "higher order discussion", which demonstrates an interest and importance of the topic. The tweet also indicates a lack of discussion around transformation as the user is directing the discussion to the issue. In this manner, hashtags function as an issue marker and the tweets are able to influence the flow of the discourse produced.

Additionally, hashtags also facilitate a virtual reality which leads to the construction of a networked public. A virtual reality encompasses communication processes which are made up of symbolic features. Papacharissi (2009) argues that technologies are appropriated into society through their social meaning and use. The hashtag has gained its social meaning as a place of discussion through Twitter. The use of #BlackMonday has functioned in various ways. The following tweets will discuss the various ways which the #BlackMonday hashtag was used to construct a networked public. Both tweets were posted on 16 March which indicates the date of the event. Rosa et al, (2015) state that multiple hashtags can contribute to the discourse of the debate. In this case, #BlackMonday was used to create a meaningful debate about #RhodesMustFall.

@Gabazza_Tiba: #RhodesMustFall #BlackMonday "we need to be able to identify with this institution. [...] non white voices have been silenced" Ramabina. (16/03/2015)

@Gabazza_Tiba has used #BlackMonday to tweet a quote from UCT SRC president, Ramabina Mahapa. By including the hashtag and quote the user is circulating public opinions about the movement. #BlackMonday was a seminar conducted at UCT in which Mahapa first addressed students then eventually lead a student walk out. In this manner, the user has appropriated the hashtag to circulate new ideas and information on the movement.

As hashtags function on a one to many communication system, #RhodesMustFall and #BlackMonday were used to create a backchannel about the event. Backchannel is a communication system in which users send live tweets from a public discussion. Posting tweets during a live discussion enables users to connect with each other during the seminar. Furthermore, using Twitter as a backchannel extends participation to those who are not at the seminar as they become exposed to what is said during the seminar and can also add their own opinions to the event. As @Gabazza_Tiba posts a quote from the seminar, the user encourages public opinion as other the users will critically reflect on their own standing about the movement to agree or disagree about the movement.

Furthermore, #BlackMonday created a networked public as users were dependent on increased interaction to engage with the event. In this manner, the hashtag has been used to facilitate interactions from other users. #BlackMonday is also a display of how users utilised the #RhodesMustFall hashtag on Twitter as a centralised place of communication. The tweet below will be used to illustrate how these elements were conducted.

@RoscoeJacobs: If you supporting #BlackMonday please share your pics with Uct Src and Uct Sasco on Facebook and on twitter. #RhodesMustFall (16/03/2015)

In this tweet, @RoscoeJacobs has initiated participation from other users by encouraging the use of user generated content. This tweet constructs a networked public by requesting for pictures to be shared with different social actors such as the "Uct Src and Uct Sasco".

The user has also encouraged engagement on various social media, although the main hashtag, #RhodesMustFall was used as a centralised place to communicate this message. In this case, the user has intentionally attached the hashtag to reach a wider audience. While the hashtag is used as a centralised place of discussion, it also allows users to communicate with a larger audience than their followers as also displayed in the first tweet. Additionally, by requesting photographs, the user is actively seeking information and knowledge about the events that relate to the movement. In this manner, the social movement has been used to encourage spontaneous and creative participation which also encourages active rather than passive media users. This element of participation relates to Jenkins concept of spreadable media which refers to technological structures that enable intensive circulation which as a result, develops a "common ground for discussion" (Jenkins, 2012). In this manner, the hashtag is used as a site for meaning production and a platform for the production and consumption of media content. Therefore, Twitter users have used the hashtag, not only as a public space but as a place of participation through intense interactions. The following theme discusses these interactions in more detail.

Mentions and Retweets

Mentions are a communication system on Twitter that enable users to directly engage with each other. The receiving users gets a notification that of the message that they have received. This function allows users to engage in conversations with each other, without their message being lost in the contents of the hashtag. Users are not limited to using this function with one user but can tag several users in one tweet to encourage a grouped conversation. While this can exclude users who are not tagged in the conversation, including the hashtag in the tweets exposes other users to that conversation. This interaction with other users produces new ideas and enables meaningful participation through socialized communication. On the other hand, retweets function as a way for individuals to make tweets more visible through circulation. It also indicates agreeance from other users and can also facilitate knowledge production when other users retweet facts about the movement.

The following tweets display how this function has been applied to facilitate a meaningful dialogue and will also show how these functions have been used to achieve different levels of interaction. The tweets are from different days which also displays the intense interaction throughout the movement and how interaction has developed throughout the movement.

@zeeeeps: @CraigRoxy also, the #RhodesMustFall movement aims not to destroy the statue but place it in a museum where CJR can be 'remembered' (15/03/2015)

@zeeeeps has used this function to employ a personal opinion on the movement. This function encourages users to have an opinion about the movement and to critically reflect their own meanings by negotiate the meaning of the movement with others. Furthermore, interaction with other users contributes to the belief that their opinion in the discussion matters. Interaction also deepens the engagement among users and encourages collective action in creating a meaning for the movement. Through interaction, @zeeeps has challenged @CraigRoxy to reflect on their own beliefs and values and to share a deeper understanding of the different meanings of the #RhodesMustFall movement. Furthermore, Twitter users utilize this function to engage with each other about issues of the society. In this manner, a network is formed among users who share an interest and produce user generated content in order to engage with each other.

Castells (2011) has described this as a "space of flows" which is defined by intense interaction and a production of information which eventually results in a space that is characterised by knowledge production. Individuals do not have to be in the same geographical location in order to interact, therefore, Twitter becomes their space of interaction.

Tagging other users displays a value of their opinions and a willingness to acknowledge the perspective of other users. Although, encouraged participation is key to the public sphere, this may not be the case on Twitter as users do not always offer perspectives that are related to movement or rational opinions. This is disadvantage to the hashtag as a representation of a public sphere as the conversation will not be coherent. On the other hand, the following tweet has been used the function differently in a manner that benefits the public sphere.

@ marybfawzy: @GarethCliff you could really benefit from educating yourself on white privilege and history #RhodesMustFall (18/03/2015)

@marybfawzy is responding to a tweet by a public figure. Twitter allows users to have direct access to public figures and key figures that are related to the movement. Both the public sphere and participatory culture emphasise the importance of access. In this manner, Twitter enables direct access to public figures whereas other communication systems may limit this. By enabling access to public figures, Twitter provides a low barrier to communication and little regulation that would otherwise not be achieved through face to face communication. Responding to a tweet also enables a sense of continuity in a conversation and displays acknowledgement of the other user's contribution to the issue.

Threads

The participatory culture theory states that users actively engage in participation through creativity. While Twitter has set the limit of tweets to 140 characters, users have actively bypassed this limit through "threads". Threads are a series of tweets produced by a user to structure an argument using more than 140 characters. Threads are an indication of agency from users to actively participate in the hashtag by creatively bypassing the 140 character limit.

@ xtinamagwaza: Now this is exactly where the problem lies. Actually YOU as a white student should be grateful + #RhodesMustFall #RhodesStatue #UCT (18/03/2015)

@xtinamagwaza: to be studying here. The superiority and privilege to come from a place of 'what else do they want' + #RhodesMustFall #RhodesStatue #UCT (18/03/2015)

@xtinamagwaza: is a problematic way to look at the situation. The fact how confident he said this shows just how deep privilege runs. #RhodesMustFall #UCT (18/03/2015)

In this thread, the individual uses the + sign to indicate continuation of the argument which can be read as paragraph. In this manner, creativity is used to explore the meaning of the movement through the concept of white privilege.

The user is addressing "a white student'' through a statement they made. In this example, the tweet displays an individual actively participating in the interpretation of an opinion made by another user. The individual interprets the tweet from the perspective of white privilege and superiority. The user challenges the perspective of another and defines it as "problematic". In this manner, the user interprets the statement and is actively challenging an ideology. This presents a sense of a counter hegemonic struggle and a negotiation of power between users.

Therefore, Twitter allows users to actively participate in the interpretation of the movement by exposing users to each other's perspectives and opinions. Individuals actively negotiate concepts of power within the society using the hashtag. For further participation, all three tweets were widely circulated by other users. Users are not only exposed to opinions but the interpretations of those opinions from other individuals.

Enabling participation

Backchannel

The Twitter tagline, "What's happening" encourages users to tweet about current events happening around them. This was evident as users would tweet about demonstrations and public debates happening around their location. Live updates inform users of offline events occurring in various movement in support of the movement. Outcomes of these events may also contribute to a collective identity as users may identify with the offline public opinions that are portrayed online. Twitter enables users to exchange new ideas and knowledge in real time. Therefore, users are not only encouraged to participate through live updates but they are also encouraged to participate in the hashtag as they are exposed to vast amounts of new information about a particular issue in real time (Poell and Dijck, 2016). Live tweeting as an example of "instantaneity" as users instantly gain knowledge of current events.

@Them parbi_lewis: Solidarity protest happening now on the Rhodes University campus. #RhodesMustFall (17/03/2015)

@VuyoReneneSA: so I'm at the #RhodesMustFall protest and there's a lady here who just entered into the circle with this sign (17/03/2015)

Users also state their geographical location which may influence their perspective of the movement. For example, users who tweet from UCT campus tweet from the perspective of removing the statue while users who tweet from Rhodes University tweet from the perspective of renaming the university. Furthermore, including images in tweets enables users to have a visual idea of the events happening in offline spaces. The tweet was also retweeted various times which indicates an active consumption of user generated content that aims to update users about current events.

@Wandile_Dlamini: Demonstration began in Beattie. Pic of group moving down to #RhodesStatue on Jammie Steps. #RhodesMustFall @UCT_SRC (17/03/2025)

Live updates involve online users in offline demonstrations. In this manner the opposition is blurred as online users gain a sense of being at the location of the demonstration as they are receiving knowledge of what is happening at the event.

@david_mann92: The plan at the #RhodesMustFall solidarity gathering was simply to walk through Rhodes Uni admin building. The doors were shut on students. (17/03/2015)

Live updates can also be constructed in a manner that portrays a narrative of the event. For example the above tweets are live updates of a protests at Rhodes University. Users who are exposed to these tweets can follow what is happening during the protests through the narratives.

Citizen journalism

Twitter allows users to not only be involved in discussions and sharing of information but also enables users to be first hand reporters of the event using a hashtag without any professional skills (Weller et al., 2013). Users post images of what is happening on scene at the UCT campus. In this manner, captions function as headlines when a hyperlink or an image is included as they give context to the user generated content that will follow. Furthermore, they act as headlines as they inform users about the development of the movement (Nah and Chung, 2016). Captions also function as a headline as they do not place any judgement on the matter but simply report on what is happening.

"What is happening" is the Twitter tagline which encourages users to report on the current events around them (Weller et al., 2013). As a result, users are encouraged to participate through citizen journalism which is used to inform other users about any news or events that are related to the movement. Through citizen journalism, ordinary individuals can become producers of media content and can also frame events according to their own perceptions.

Using citizen journalism, the users represent their own narrative by tweeting live from the events. Individuals also use Twitter to inform others about the logistics of the movement and the various planning of the events that aim to further challenge individuals who are responsible for the decision making. By tweeting live from the events, users encourage a space where individuals can critically engage in public life even when they cannot participate in the events that happen offline (Papacharissi, 2009).

Furthermore, through citizen journalism, users portray the power relations between protestors and authorities responsible for decision making. The tweet below mobilises an offline discussion that and demonstrates conflict between different social actors in the university. The students are to request the Vice Chancellor to stop investigating students who are mobilising the movement. This indicates a conflict and power struggle that is produced by the movement. In this view, social media is an important tool as it enables "issue-focused reporting" and foregrounds the view of an ordinary citizen (Poell and Dijck, 2016). As a result, individuals start to rely less on traditional media and more on networks.

@BusiMkhumbuzi: At the 16h00 discussion we are going to ask the VC to stop investigating students who are at the forefront of the #RhodesMustFall campaign. (15/03/2015)

Through citizen journalism, the researcher can track different events that happened during the movement. For example, on the 15 March 2015 the Rhodes Statue was covered in a black plastic bin bag. Various users tweeted about this event, making it a publicized matter. Although the image attached is on another social media platform, users can gain knowledge from the caption. The tweet below also indicates a networked society as the user is simultaneously reporting on the same matter on different social media platforms. Furthermore, the same user reports on another event that was happening on the same day. As users can tweet live from the protests, other users may depend on them for updates on the protests.

@indielactivist: The situation this morning. Cecil covered in a black plastic bag. #RhodesMustFall

https://instagram.com/p/0Pfw-1P5OF/ (15/03/2015)

@indielactivist: Prep/the banner for the mobilisation this morning. #RhodesMustFall

https://instagram.com/p/0PfitTP5Nw/. (15/03/2015).

Another event that was tracked through citizen journalism occurred on 16 March 2015. A high number of users mobilised using the #BlackMonday hashtag. The #BlackMonday hashtag is related to the #RhodesMustFall movement as students were encouraged to wear black to campus on the day. This is a representation of black students on the campus as users were arguing that black students are not equally recognized on the campus.

From the discussion above, it has been established that users feel encouraged to participate through citizen journalism. In addition, there are users that request updates from those that are present at events. This indicates that the users' participation is valued and acknowledged by other users. Citizen journalism also promotes a civil society and a demand for quality and instantly available information. Different users are identified as a source of information and begin to function as a news outlet to other users.

The identified individuals become producers of reliable news and the users that request the information are identified consumers of the content. Although, the theory of the public sphere holds that too much information can lead to a distortion of the public sphere.

@RoscoeJacobs: If you supporting #BlackMonday please share your pics with Uct Src and Uct Sasco on Facebook and on twitter. #RhodesMustFall. (16/03/2015)

@AishwaryaFly: So @SeanMagner is giving a pretty sober account of #RhodesMustFall proceedings at #UCT. No pressure but please don't lose signal dude.(16/03/2015)

The above tweets demonstrate a user who requesting information on the movement and another who is acknowledging that they have identified a certain user as a source of information. While citizen journalism played a large role during the movement, users that include images of the events happening during the protests tend to have more retweets than simple updates. For example the tweets below received more retweets than any tweets that have been mentioned above.

@Wandile_Dlamini: Demonstration began in Beattie. Pic of group moving down to #RhodesStatue on Jammie Steps. #RhodesMustFall @UCT_SRC. (17/03/2015).

@Sindelo: The Yale African Students Association stand in solidarity with the #RhodesMustFall Movement http://yaledailynews.com/blog/2015/04/01/rhodes-must-fall-everywhere/ … (01/04/2015)

The tweet regarding Yale University is an indication of the circulation of user generated content. The hashtag has been used to circulate information and ideas online to a global reach. Students at Yale University posted a photograph in support of the movement which indicates access to wide information about different locations. Posting an image also suggests that social media platfoms have encouraged users to be active participants of media content rather than passive users. It is also an indication of strong ties among users whereby in this case, distance would have been a limitation to participation and communication among individuals.

Photographs

Everyday photography is enabled by the developments of digital phones that contain cameras. On the other hand, Twitter has a function under the tagline "What is happening?". This function enables users to directly take photographs and simultaneously upload them on the platform. As a result, mobile phones and Twitter has created a platform that encourages user generated images by providing an image sharing platform. Consequently, these photographs become a site for the construction of a networked public due to several factors. Firstly, photographs are indicators of the presence of an individual at the site of offline events related to the movement. Secondly, photographs enable visual culture which produces a widespread of eye witnesses as other users are exposed to images and gain knowledge of offline demonstrations. This links them to the event in real time and also connects them to the producer and contents of the photograph. Therefore, users are instantly linked to the event through the platform. Lastly, a networked public is constructed through the circulation of the image in which the photograph functions as a connection between offline and online activities. Thirdly, producers portray a personal experience which can facilitate online discussions according to the interpretation of the image. Lastly, photographs are affirmation of the commitment of users to the movement. The following photographs display how these functions were utilized by individuals during the #RhodesMustFall movement.

Figure 1: @Sindelo: 'The Rise of a Post-colonial University' by Ruchi Chaturvedi http://buff.ly/1xWmOok #RhodesMustFall (6/04/2015)

While this image was posted by several users, it will be contextualised from the user who received the most retweets for it as it reveals the source of interpretation for the users that were exposed to it. The photograph will first be analysed denotatively which is the first level of analysis, then connotatively.

On a denotative level, the digital image portrays a close-up shot of a young girl with a white tape over her mouth with the words "#RhodesMustFall" hand-written on it in black ink. The girl is also wearing a nose ring and a black choker which is tight necklace worn around the neck. The exact race of the girl cannot be determined by the image, although it can be concluded that she is non-white due to her medium beige skin tone and her curly hair. Her eyes are not directed at the camera, instead she is gazing at something off camera. Furthermore, the background of the image has been blurred, making her face, more specifically, the tape on her mouth, the focus of the image. As the background has been blurred, the location of the image has been decontextualised.

While it may seem that photographs represent reality, Theo van Leuwen argues that they reproduce rather than represent reality. This is to say that they claim to have a sense of truthfulness but are not entirely truthful to what they represent. Granted, photographs can increase authenticity, especially in regards to citizen journalism as they provide photographic evidence. However, photographs can be manipulated through lighting and editing which limits their representation of reality. This is demonstrated in the above image where the background has been blurred, which limits the reality represented by the image. In this manner, photographs only produce certain aspects of reality. Additionally, photographs are iconic as they resemble what is signified. In this image, the photograph resembles the young girl in the image. Photographs are also indexical as they imply a connection to the signified. In this case, the photograph signifies the presence of a photographer and the moment in which the young girl was being captured by the photographer.

Connotatively, the tape is the most important part of the image as it carries most of the connotations in the image and it also has a linguistic code. The location of the tape, which is on her mouth contributes to the interpretation of the image which signifies powerlessness as she is being denied a voice to express herself. The tape is a metaphor for the movement, as the movement also signifies powerlessness and the lack of a black narrative in the symbolism of UCT. The movement also implies the powerlessness of black students which results in their voices being silenced.

In addition, the tape also signifies being suffocated as it can potentially interfere with her breathing. The choker around her neck is a historical reference to similar chains that were worn by slaves. The above signs contribute to the ideology of oppression which proposes unfair treatment and control over a specific group of individuals. This image specifically portrays institutional oppression as the tape is labelled "#RhodesMustFall". Institutional oppression is identified as a system that targets a specific group of people through institutions which reproduce inequalities in the society by mistreating that group of people. In the #RhodesMustFall movement, institutional oppression has been defined through the ideology of racism as several users have identified the university as a system institutional racism. As an example, a tweet by @AJStream has been provided to support the above argument. It is also supported by the caption which identifies the movement as a "rise of a post-colonial university".

The caption implies that the university has previously been a representation of colonialism which also subscribes to the discourse of oppression.

@AJStream: On Wed's show: Students w/ the #RhodesMustFall mvt want to "decolonise" their university of institutionalised racism. (4/04/2015)

While the #RhodesMustFall movement is opposed to institutional oppression and seeks to remove symbols of oppression, this is also reflected by the tape which appears to be peeling off from the top left corner. Despite this, the girl is also wearing a choker which may be representative of being restrained by this oppression, on the other hand, the choker may also not have any significant meaning. This presents a problem in the polysemy nature of a semiotic analysis in which images are open to different kinds of interpretations depending on the meaning received by the interpreter. In the discourse of the movement, the cultural meaning of a choker may be applicable, but it should also be considered that the young girl did not intentionally wear it to contribute to the meaning of the image, but rather as an item of jewelry.

Furthermore, the use of the hashtag symbol on the tape is an intertextual reference to the online campaign. In this manner, social media has a provided a new way of protesting as it has a created a convergence between offline and online spaces. This advances the construction of a networked public as it presents a hybrid public space, whereby digital symbols also have a significant meaning in offline spaces during protests. In this manner, the individual has used her body as a site for meaning production and negotiation. Other users participate in the process of meaning production as visual content encourages a process on interpretation and appropriation.

Moreover, while users interpret the image, they are also required to critically reflect on their position in relation to the movement. In this case, the feature of posting images on Twitter has enabled a participatory culture as the structure of this photograph was intentional in the manner that the young girl has posed and the lighting on her face. Although, the original producer of the image cannot be determined as it was posted by several users. However, another user posted the same image with the same caption indicating that the image is somehow linked to the hyperlink posted. Unfortunately, this introduces a problem as anything posted on the domain becomes public property and the original owner of the image cannot be determined.

The following images represent the movement differently. The images are from international universities demonstrating their support for the movement.

Figure 2: @Harold_Ferwood: @ChanelBevis - that's why #Rhodesmustfall. End #WhitePrivilege. (3/04/2015)

The above photograph portrays a group of students from different races holding up a banner. The group of females can be understood to be students as they are holding a banner representing Yale university. In the photograph, none of the students are smiling which brings a tone of seriousness in the image, indicating that the matter represented is of importance. The banner also provides a linguistic code that contributes to the context of the image. Additionally, the photograph is a synecdoche of Yale University. A synecdoche is a sign in which a part is representative of a whole. In this photograph, the banner aims to represent "Yale University", although the photograph is inclusive of only a few selected students.

The banner is a white piece of cloth which is held up by the protestors. The cloth has the words: "DECOLONIZE OUR EDUCATION Yale University in SOLIDARITY with UCT #RHODESMUSTFALL" written in black ink. Some of the words are underlined and bold while other words are written in a normal format. This can bring emphasis to the message that the image is trying to depict. The bold emphasis on "DECOLONIZE", "YALE", University, "UCT" and #RHODESMUSTFALL" signifies that the students are taking a strong stand for the decolonization of local and international universities. While all the words are in capital letters, underlining and making some of the words bold brings more attention to those specific words. Theo van Leeuwen explains that linguistic codes have signifying potential rather than specific meanings as they concentrate on meanings that are already embedded in society. In this example, the meaning of the photograph will be different if the banner had to be excluded. Having these words on the image enforces a shared community among students in higher learning institutions beyond geographical boundaries. As a result, the hashtag along with visual representations of the movement develops a shared identity amongst local and international students participating in the movement. Gillian Rose argues that visual culture is critical as it promotes a deeper understanding of social dynamics, identities and processes of social change. This demonstrates that grassroot communication such as hashtags can intensify international concerns around social media movements.

In addition, there is a building in the background which appears to be part of Yale University. The image is also an iconic sign of a moment as it aims to represent a certain aspect of reality, in which the students are posing for the photograph. Yale University is named after Elihu Yale, a historical figure who was involved in slave trading. Shortly after #RhodesMustfall, students at Yale also began protesting the universities association to slave trading due its name, and racial prejudices experienced on campus. This demonstrates that social media activism invokes a shared identity as Yale students were able to identify with the movement and share its sentiments despite their location. In this manner, social media activism promotes awareness of marginalised issues and encourages global collective action as other users demonstrate the movement in locations close to them.

Moreover, a network of solidarity is formed between students at Yale and students at UCT. This is demonstrated by students standing together with the banner which also signifies unity in the movement. The different races that are present in the image is also a display of unity, although the photograph is not clear enough to determine specific races. As demonstrated by the critical discourse analysis of texts, the general consensus among Twitter users is that individuals of the white race are not in support of the movement. This is also demonstrated by the caption in which the user associates the movement with white privilege. The photograph goes against that by displaying various races in support of the movement. In this case, the caption also displays another use for the mention function. The user has tagged another on the photograph, using this function navigate and expose them to this photograph.

The image also signifies a contrast between old and modern social structures. Although it is not the focus of the photograph, the building has a fading color and an old architectural style. As discussed, Yale and UCT have had a great influence from historical figures who are representative of old social systems based on colonialism. As Barthes (1977) argues, signs are not only representations of certain realities but also function to represent certain ideologies. From this view, the old building is connotative of colonial social systems while the banner challenges and calls for a decolonization of those systems. Similarly, the students standing in front of the building signify a new generation and the future. Students in higher educational institutions are connotative of a preparation for the future. It should be noted that the meaning of decolonization may differ from each university, especially in cultural contexts. For example, decolonization at UCT also challenges the inclusion of African languages in the curriculum. However, there are similarities as both UCT and Yale challenged decolonization from the perspective of institutional racism.

To further demonstrate the construction of a networked public by the movement, the following photograph was selected. The photograph is similar to the previous photograph, although in this example the photograph is from Oxford University. The photograph was posted earlier than the previous one but they have been situated in this manner to display the chain of events.

Figure 3: @Sindelo: University of Oxford students standing in solidarity with the #RhodesMustFall movement at University of Cape Town. (19/03/2015)

The image contains a few individuals holding a banner in front of a big building. The building is brown and appears old due to its architectural structure that follows a renaissance style. Renaissance describes a historical cultural period that occurred in Europe. While the banner gives meaning to the photograph, the building makes up most of the composition. This signifies an emphasis on the support for the movement from Oxford. Moreover, it also signifies an educational system which the movement aims to challenge.

On the banner, the words: "DECOLONIZE EDUCATION RHODES MUST FALL" appear. Although, one of the individuals is standing in front of the banner, hiding some of the letters, the message can still be interpreted. Furthermore, the words: "DECOLONIZE", "RHODES" AND "FALL" are written in red, which is a color that symbolizes danger and passion. In relation to movement, the words written in red symbolise the important aspects of the movement, which is decolonization, and the removal of Rhodes' statue. The individuals are also dressed in warm clothing which signifies a cold weather.

Furthermore, the photograph may require some knowledge about the building. Some users may be able to recognize the building, while others may not have this knowledge and interpret the photograph differently. Fortunately, the caption functions as a tool to guide the interpretation of the image. Chandler explains that captions direct the user to the intended reading of the photograph. In this case, the caption further contextualises the photographs and informs the user about the location through paradigmatic relations. Paradigmatic relation refers to signs that gain their meaning in relation to other signs. In this example, the banner gives meaning to the building and the caption gives meaning to the photograph.

Likewise, Twitter also contributes to the meaning of the photograph. The photograph is a visual representation of the movement in a mediated form and therefore the potential significance of the platform should be considered. Unlike the previous photograph, this banner does not make any reference to the online campaign. The user locates the photograph in the hashtag which provides an interpretive frame for the photograph. The hashtag is also used as an issue marker as the photograph makes sense on its own but the hashtag locates it within the #RhodesMustFall movement. Furthermore, the hashtag develops a virtual reality that connects international and local students around the same issue. By including the hashtag in the caption, the user contributes to the construction of a networked public. The construction of a networked public is not only limited to the hashtag but it is also established through the banner in the photograph.

The banner signifies a visual expression of solidarity from Oxford students which forms a unified network that goes beyond the South African context. Meanwhile, the banner itself is a medium of communication. In this manner, posting the image on Twitter symbolises interaction through three mediums of communication. Firstly, through the banner, through visual communication and lastly, through a social media platform. The caption also indicates that the photograph expresses solidarity. Gerbaodo (2012) has identified solidarity as a crucial element for collective action. In this manner, collective action is symbolised by the photograph. While students from Oxford are not able to protest at UCT due to geographical restrictions, they have still participated in the movement by orgnanising a demonstration at their own campus. Furthermore, the photograph functions as a mobilising tool for collective action as it encourages other users to find their own way of participating in the movement despite the restrictions.

The following photograph functions differently from the photographs above. The above photographs have been actively constructed by the photographer and the subjects. The subjects have posed for the camera, displaying awareness of the camera and the moment in which the photograph will be captured. Posing for a photograph indicates a calculated gesture to the reality that the subject wants to show the world. The photograph is also different as it displays individuals in direct contact with the statue, therefore actively constructing meaning around the relationship between the statue and the movement. Additionally, the images above have been posted by individuals.

Memes

The following section will analyse the memes that were posted on Twitter during the #RhodesMustFall movement. Memes aim to transfer ideas by creatively using user-generated content and may not necessarily portray reality. Memes also may not have a direct association with the movement but can gain meaning through the context of the movement. Internet memes can be described as "networks of mediated cultural participation in their creation, circulation and transformation – are well positioned to answer questions on the interplay of participatory media, social representations, and public discourse" (Milner, 2012: 9).This means that memes are images that are representative of internet discourse and identity. They portray how media texts interact with public discourse. Memes are participatory in nature as they require collaborative creativity from different texts to convey a message through a joke or an argument in a form of an image. Users also create and distribute memes to appropriate new ideas. Therefore, memes are based on cultural connotation and require primary knowledge.

Figure 4: @thedailyvox: What happens after the statue falls? @UCTStudent http://bit.ly/1FzjwZH
#RhodesMustFall #TransformUCT (18/03/2015)

This meme takes form of a digital cartoon strip as it has multiple frames with animated characters. This meme contains three vertical strips that contain linguistic codes and follow a sequence of events that predict the outcome of the movement. The first strip presents a crowd and the words "Rhodes Must Go" are written repeatedly with a man wearing a board with the same text around his neck. The statue of Rhodes is presented in the background which suggests that the location of the protest is at UCT. The second strip portrays the statue of Rhodes finally being taken down by the same characters from the first strip and the word "YEAAHH" is placed above the statue. The third strip is still located at the university but it portrays fewer individuals. There are two individuals sitting on a steps with the words "so…what now?" in a speech bubble.

The cartoon strips will be interpreted separately to be followed with the overall interpretation of the image. The characters have crooked eyebrows and their fists are in the air which signifies anger. It is common for a protesting crowd to put their fists in the air as it symbolises unity and support of the movement. The words "Rhodes must go" are written repeatedly suggesting that the crowd is chanting. Therefore, the first strip represents the current offline protest movement on the campus.

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Secondly, the following strip depicts the statue of Rhodes being removed by the same characters. The word "YEAAHHH!" is boldly written above the statue and it is also in capital letters which signifies the crowds' approval and excitement of the statue being taken down. The use of an exclamation mark emphasises the excitement of the crowd. This strip's main objective is to portray the success of the movement and the crowds influence in decision making.

Lastly, the final section has two individuals sitting on the steps. In the background the statue has gone (it was there in the first section). This illustrates the dispersion of the crowd after the statue has been removed and suggests that the crowd came together for the objective of removing the statue. The speech bubble is an illustration of an individual asking the other "so…what now?" This question symbolises confusion and suggests that the crowd had no real objective for the movement.

While the cartoon strip acknowledges that the movement may represent deeper issues which are not being explored. These issues are not being directly communicated as the main aim of the movement is to remove the statue which may result in the deeper issues being unresolved. The cartoon implies that the wide issues to do with decolonization that underpin the #RhodesMustFall movement are most likely to still remain after the statue is taken down. The third strip illustrates confusion and the dispersion of the crowd suggests that the objectives will not be fulfilled beyond the movement. The author of the image is expressing their opinion through creativity and user generated content.

Figure 5: @UCTStudent: #UCTMemes "#RhodesMustFall end #WhitePrivilege" (30/03/2015)

Also posted by @Harold_Ferwood: @pierredevos @Eusebius @MmusiMaimane @ThuliMadonsela3 @AbbyMartin @Jay_Naidoo #RhodesMustFall end #WhitePrivilege (30/03/2015)

The above image is of a white male with the text, which is in capital latters and a white text over the image "SO YOU SAY #RHODESMUSTFALL WILL ACHIEVE NOTHING?" at the top. While the bottom of the image contains the words in a larger font "TELL ME MORE WHY YOU FEEL THAT WAY". It also contains a watermark of a website that generates images which is an indexical sign of user-generated content.

The linguistic codes and the facial expression of the person in the image provides context to the interpretation of the image. The image assumes that the reader conforms to the idea that the movement will not achieve anything. It further requests the reader to provide an explanation as to why they feel that way. The person in the image is slightly smiling with his eyes portraying interest through his gaze. These symbolic signs suggest that he is amused by individuals who feel that the #RhodesMustFall movement will not achieve anything. In conclusion, the image suggests that individuals who conform to that idea are not to be taken seriously.

This image and the image above are in dialogue with each other as the image above explains why the movement may not achieve anything while the image being discussed portrays amusement for individuals that believe that. In this manner, the two users have used user generated content in order to participate in the movement while engaging with each other.

Figure 6: @Sinesipho_: #RhodesMustFall (20/03/2015)

This photograph depicts a glass bottle with a silver lid that had been placed on a table. The glass bottle is foregrounded in the photograph, with the background being an indistinct room. The bottle contains a clear liquid. The bottle has a chalkboard space on it, which has written in white chalk "WHITE TEARS."

The image also contains paradigmatic signs that deconstruct the myth of white privilege through satire and humour. The image has a lavish atmosphere as the bottle, table and chair appear to be expensive and of great quality. The detailed and extravagant decoration of the bottle contributes to the lavish atmosphere of the image. The presentation of the table and chair suggest that the bottle is being served at a place of consumption. The label on the bottle suggests that "WHITE TEARS" are being served to consumers with great care due to the expensive atmosphere of the image. The lavish setting of the image also suggests that "white tears" come from a place of privilege.

The overall interpretation of the image suggest that the issues experienced by white individuals are treated with great care in the society, although they came from a place of privilege. This provides a binary opposition as it also suggests that the issues experienced by black individuals are not treated in the same manner and do not come from a place of privilege.

Conclusion

Participatory culture is reflected on Twitter as the functions encourage users to express their opinion, collaborate in creative process and interact. The hashtag function acts as an information hub and a gathering space. Users can engage with other users who have interest in the movement and debate about it. As Twitter has little regulation, users can freely express themselves even if they are in opposition to the movement. Visual materials were circulated under the hashtag to create awareness of the events happening in several spaces regarding the movement. The visual material enabled individuals to construct a deeper meaning of the movement.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONSLUCSION

Social media movements enable intense interactions of various structures of the society. Traditional media converges with social media to reach online audiences. However, ordinary individuals also have access to a large audience. Hashtags enable users to participate in the movement regardless of their geographical locations. International universities were aware of the #RhodesMustFall movement and shared messages of solidarity. This indicated the construction of a networked public. Twitter provided various functions that were beneficial to the movement. The platform was used as a photo sharing tool. The visual images represented Cecil Rhodes as a figure of oppression whose ideologies still influence institutional culture in modern South Africa. As the statue eventually fell on 9 April, the social movement proved to be successful. Although, from the discourse of the tweets, the statue was a symbol of the social issues that are experienced and not the main aim of the movement. The tweets indicated a lack of transformation, especially with regards to the discourse of race. The tweets proved that race remains to be a large issue in South Africa and that racial discriminations still take place in discourses, The movement enabled such grassroot and marginalised issues to be discusses, and therefore these issues became more visible to the society. Several other Universities held discussion panels about the movement, leading the discourses explored by the movement to become a nationwide conversation. In this manner, there is a strong relationship between social movements and the network society as movements largely uses Twitter to mobilse and engage with the movement. International students displayed the networked society by constructing public spaces that were relevant to the movement. The hashtag and movement were also a learning opportunity for those who were exposed to the discourse online.

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Appendix 1

Critical discourse analysis guideline

Terminology

- **Discourse strand:** Refers to the themes that arise from the discourse
- **Discourse fragment:** Refers to the text or part of a text that the discourse occurs in. Combined together, discourse fragments produce discourse strands.
- **Discourse strand entanglements**: Refers to a text that has a main theme but may contain several other themes within it. In this manner, the text may refer to other discourse strands
- **Discourse plane**: Refers to various subject matters of the society such us politics and education in which discourse fragments operate in. Such subject matters may have their own particular way of discussing their discourse fragments but also often can relate to each other.
- **Discourse position**: Refers to the ideological location of the discourse. This can be contributed to by the participation of individuals, groups and institutions in a discourse which may produce and reproduce its ideology and discourse entanglements.

1. **Analyse the structure of the text**
- How is the argument structured?
- Identify the issues that the text aims to discuss
2. **Discursive statements**
- Analyse the discourse fragments
- How does the text relate to the topic?
- Identify the myths, Implications and insinuations the text conveys
- Identify the linguistic techniques that have been used in the text and their function in the text
3. **Determine references from the text**
- Does the text make reference to other texts?
- Does the text refer to any historical or future contexts?
- What social actors does the text make reference to?
4. **Interpret the data**
- What function does the text seek to serve?
- What ideology is the text employing?
- What kind of understanding of the society does the text display
- Does the text convey a sense of difference? (E.G: Us and them)
- What judgements does the text convey on the subjects it wishes to differ from?
- Concluding interpretation of the text
- What kind of understanding of the society does the text display

5. **Code the data**
- Determine possible coding categories
- Identify the discourse strands
- Place discourse strands into appropriate themes or sub themes

6. **Place the data into themes**
- Identify the several themes that have emerged from the data
- Place themes into the context of the topic
- Analyse the dominant discourse positions in the various themes

7. **Relevance of findings**
- How do the findings relate to the literature and theoretical framework?
- Limitations

Several steps will have to be repeated to fully analyse the data. The analysis will be complete when the data does not present further content or findings.

Semiotic analysis guideline

1. **Identify the signs in the text**
   - Identify the visual signs of the text
   - Determine the nature of the signs in text (symbolic, iconic or indexical)
   - Identify the paradigmatic and syntagmatic signs in the text

2. **Denotative level**
   - Describe the text
   - Identify the signifiers of the text

3. **Connotative level**
   - Describe what the text has signified
   - What codes are embedded in the text?
   - What do the signs in the text aim to represent?

4. **Interpretation**
   - Which ideology is conveyed by the text?
   - What myth is illustrated in the text?

5. **Construct findings**
   - Describe the overall message of the text
   - Limitations of analysis