Of Placards and Hashtags: Dissent in Physical and Virtual Spaces

The Case of the 2017-2019 Protests in Bucharest

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Abstract

Many cities around the world have experienced, throughout their history, groups of people taking to the streets to voice their complaints. From the French Revolution to the Tiananmen Square protests, violent or peaceful opposition to central authorities and their practices is not a new area of academic inquiry. However, recent technological advancements allowed for the development and use of new types of spaces and people can now express their grievances in the virtual realm. This thesis investigates the relationship between online and offline activism, connecting and analyzing the practices of protest in both tangible and digital spaces. The case of the 2017-2019 anti-government Romanian protests is used for the study of both types of activism, as the protesters have both occupied public squares in Bucharest, and made extensive use of digital platforms under the *#rezist* hashtag. The study adopts a multidisciplinary approach to examine the variety of factors that intertwine the physical and digital world, using both qualitative methods to shed light on the context, and quantitative methods to describe and evaluate the process. The thesis concludes that the symbiotic relationship between the online and offline components of the protests has changed the way in which the physical demonstrations are organized and perceived. Furthermore, the research also reveals that protesters and the media place an overemphasis on the digital component of activism, believing it to be vital to their goal, facilitating organization. However, evidence suggests that while an online presence is advantageous in several ways, its importance might be overestimated, with virtual spaces more often being used to display the achievements of physical protests, rather than help plan future street events.

Keywords: protest, activism, hashtag, virtual spaces, Romania, #rezist, social media;

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1. Glossary: Definitions and Nuances

In order to understand the topics to be presented and discussed later in this thesis, it is important to first lay down a common understanding of key terms used in the literature and beyond. While some terms have similar meanings (but with explainable differences), other terms see a transformation in meaning depending on the context where they are placed in or the time at which they are used. Therefore, the reader will find below an attempt at discussing and defining some of these key terms, in order to prepare them for an easier and better understanding of the chapters to follow. The explanations of some terms, even if trivial, are interdependent, so the reader should be prepared to look at the list in its entirety for a proper understanding of the descriptions.

Activism, Demonstration, Protest, Riot, Revolt, Revolution: From the docile to the most impactful and potentially violent, the list of terms does not have clear, universally accepted, boundaries in between their meanings. While revolutions usually imply a change in government form, that does not stop journalists or activists from using the term more broadly. In the same way, what a group of people might see as a *protest*, others might consider a *riot*, depending on the positive or negative spin they attach to it. Still, for the purpose of this paper, in the interest of clarity, I believe at least a general distinction should be drawn. Activists can be considered any and all people that support and advocate for a cause. They can do so anywhere and anytime: directly and privately interacting with other actors, or publicly campaigning for their goal (Hands 2011). In contrast, protesters are generally part of a group and take action (publicly displaying their grievances) to oppose or condemn a specific action (or inaction). Additionally, a protester can also be an activist and the other way around. As for protests and demonstrations, I use these terms interchangeably for authorized and unauthorized action, planned or unplanned. I refer to riots and revolts when violence is involved, and clashes with the authorities happen. A protest can transform into a riot, a riot can become a revolt, and finally, a revolution happens if not only the political leaders are being opposed, but the very nature of the political system is targeted.

Digital Platforms: Any application or website that offers users a way to interact with the digital can be considered a platform. More specifically, *online* digital platforms (or social media platforms) are connected to the internet and allows users to directly or indirectly interact with one another. Since only online digital platforms are considered for this study, the term online is sometimes dropped. Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, 4chan, or Telegram are all digital platforms that enable users to communicate, share content, and generally interact with one another. Each of them has a particular focus. Instagram is built around sharing pictures; Facebook intends to digitally connect users that already share something in common (location, opinion, interest, etc.); 4chan is built around anonymity, and Telegram and WhatsApp are a (sometimes group) messaging platform. Lastly, Twitter is often referred to as a microblogging platform because of its first-person writing and character limit (Arceneaux and Schmitz Weiss 2010).

Anonymous and Semi-anonymous: From the platforms mentioned above, only Facebook requests that users use their true identity, even if the rule is hard to enforce. Almost all others (Instagram, Twitter, Reddit, etc.) are semi-anonymous meaning that users have a username attached to their activity that holds a history of their generated content and interactions on the platform, but does not reveal their identity. 4chan is an anonymous platform by only attaching the flag of the IP address from where a post was submitted. There are no usernames, no reputation system, or any activity history.

Post and Tweet: The terms refer to the same action (and could be used interchangeably), with the only difference being the platform where the action has been performed. Also, both terms can be used as a verb or as a noun. On most digital platforms, creating content means making a post; on Twitter, users *tweet.* Historically a tweet was a (usually public) message of up to 140 characters (a limit mirroring the one of SMS cellphone messaging during the '90s) that a user could share with the rest of the platform members (Tremayne 2014, 111). A tweet allows for links to other websites and the attachment of a picture, moving picture (GIF) or short video. Moreover, a user can call the attention of another member of the platform by sending a tweet that includes their handle (i.e., username on Twitter) preceded by the @ symbol. This is referred to as a *mention* and is generated automatically when a user replies to another tweet (Twitter 2019). Finally, it is worth noting that on November 7, 2017, Twitter doubled its character limit to 280 – something that needs to be taken into account when analyzing activity on the website that overlaps with the date of the change.

Hashtag: This term can most easily be understood as a keyword designed for implementation within the search and database archive capabilities of social platforms. A hashtag, created in 2007 by a former Google developer, is a type of metadata tag allowing users to dynamically tag their content in order to make it possible for other users to find the content related to a specific theme. A hashtag is created by placing the pound sign # in front of a series of unseparated characters (letters, numbers, and underscores that usually form a word or phrase, but do not necessarily have to). Hashtags are not case sensitive and therefore #Romania or #romania are viewed as identical by algorithms and search engines. Depending on the platform, searching for a hashtag should produce a list of content that has been marked with that specific tagged. For example, on Instagram, the photo-sharing service, the hashtag *#sunset* enables users to find pictures of sunsets. Since users tag content themselves, hashtags are sometimes misleading and underrated content can be, mistakenly or purposely, wrongly marked (Chang and Hemalata Iyer 2012). It is also important to note that online platforms have proprietary algorithms for creating the list of content generated after searching for a hashtag. Twitter has a system that considers the popularity of a tweet, its age, geographical location, and platform connectedness of the user that generated the content with the user that searched for the hashtag. All these factors help generate a list of hashtag tagged content that is arranged in a way that strives to be most relevant for the user searching. Therefore, hashtag use increases the potential for visibility of a tweet, as the message can more easily be found through searches (Small 2011). For the purpose of this paper, the # sign should be considered silent when reading. Therefore "hashtag #rezist" should be read as "hashtag rezist", not "hashtag hashtag rezist."

Hashtag Activism: This term was coined quite a bit later than the first events and actions it is used to describe, being first proposed in a Guardian article in September 2011. The

Journalist Eric Augenbraun used *hashtag activism* to describe the online actions that lead to the physical demonstrations of the *#OccupyWallStreet* movement (Bailey et al. 2016). Yet, the *#ArabSpring* predates the creation of the term, but it can retroactively be described by it just as suiting as *#OccupyWallStreet* is. Following, many causes, pushing for political change or raising awareness, made use of internet support and engagement to achieve their goals, all falling under the larger umbrella of *hashtag activism*. The term can generally be substituted and while preserving meaning with cyber activism, digital activism, online activism, or internet activism, noting that not all online activism necessarily happens under a hashtag, but all hashtag activism happens online.

Follow and Subscribe: These terms can be used interchangeably. Most digital platforms have a counter for the number of users being *registered* to receive updates on content created by other users. For the content creator, these users represent their audience and are called their *followers* or *subscribers*. A user with a large number of followers/subscribers is sometimes considered an *influencer*, having a broad reach in spreading information.

Share and Retweet: Some digital platforms, most notably Facebook, use the word *share* to describe a user *citing* the content of another user and *sharing* it with their own audience. On Twitter, this action is known as *retweeting*, while on blogs it is similarly called *reblogging*. Most platforms show the original creator of the content and let the user that cited it add its own comments concerning the original post.

Like: One of the simplest ways for a user to interact with content is to *like* it. A *thumbs-up* 👍 symbol on Facebook or a *heart* ♥ on Twitter and Instagram signifies, when clicked, that the user performing the action approves or enjoys the content. This action is the fastest and easiest way to interact with content, and most platforms offer a variation of it.

Unlike and Dislike: *Unlike* is the action of taking back the *like* that was given before. A user cannot *unlike* a post unless they previously *liked* it. The number of *unlikes* is not publicly displayed, but the public number of likes decreases by one for every unlike. Similarly, a *dislike* is mutually exclusive with a *like*. However, by contrast, a *dislike* does not require a *like* to be performed beforehand, and usually does have a separate publicly displayed counter. Furthermore, the action is commonly associated with a *thumbs down* 👎 symbol. As an example, Facebook allows for *unlikes*, but there is no function for *dislikes*, while YouTube has both options implemented in their platform.

Feed and Timeline: When most users access a digital platform, they are presented with a (sometimes personalized) *feed* or *timeline*. This is a series of platform content that is presented to the user, usually arranged in chronological order, in terms of relevancy and popularity, or a combination of those factors.

Impressions: This term is generally used to analyze a post on Twitter and refers to the number of times a tweet has been shown on a user's feed. This, however, does not mean that the tweet has actually been seen by a user, as they can skip it by either scrolling past it or refreshing their feed with new content (Dughi 2017).

Engagement: Unlike impressions, engagements are generated only when a user sees a tweet. If the user interacts with the content in any way (clicking on it, liking it, commenting, retweeting, etc.) it counts as one *engagement*. Good quality tweets generate engagement; uninteresting ones are usually skipped over by users (Lee 2017).

Engagement Rate: Number of engagements divided by impressions. A high number means the tweet was successful in catching the interest and attention of other users.

2. Introduction and Contextualization
2.1. Why I care: The Author's Bias

Please let me start by saying that I have gone into the journey of writing this thesis fully committed to objectively and critically conducting my analysis. I would like to affirm that the purpose of this paper is not to decide if protests, in general, or the *#rezist* (meaning "resist" in Romanian) movement, in particular, have justified reasons at their basis. Nor do I set myself to answer any question pertaining to the overall success of the movement. While perhaps interesting, such inquiries fall outside of the scope of this paper, and attempting to answer them without the proper tools, methods, and research could only prove to be erroneous and counterproductive. Still, I feel it is imperative I start by honestly and transparently describing my relationship and involvement with the subject matter, as it is still possible, despite my best efforts, that throughout the paper there will still be signs of bias on my behalf.

I was born in 1992 to my Romanian mother and Italian father, two years after Romania overthrew the communist regime and became a democracy. When I was two, my father passed away, and I continued growing up with my mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother (until I was 11), in a three-room apartment, in a quiet and safe neighborhood built in the 1960s by the communist regime in Bucharest. As part of the lower-middle class, I went to a public kindergarten, primary school, and middle school in my neighborhood. For high school, I was accepted into an esteemed public institution but declined in favor of attending the private International Computer High School of Bucharest after being offered a full scholarship. The institution is said to be loosely associated with the Fethullah Gülen movement, but I have not experienced it in a way that would make me deem that as relevant to my education. The first time I engaged in politics was during my senior year of high school, when I became part of PNL's (Partidul Național Liberal – National Liberal Party) local youth organization, but attended only one meeting, after which others were not organized.

At the age of 18, I moved to Abu Dhabi to attend college at the newly opened New York University campus (NYUAD). During the four years before receiving my bachelor's in economics, I became involved with the small Romanian community (as part of NYUAD's second class I was the first Romanian to be accepted, but others followed the next years) and watched the presidential election debates in 2014, live streaming the Romanian TV coverage. It was inconvenient to vote at the consulate on the day of elections, but at the time I was happy with Klaus Iohannis winning.

The start of the *#rezist* protests found me in Shanghai, further from Romania than I was before. I have heard news coverage of the events, but I did not pay much attention to it, being in an environment more mindful of US politics. In the two years of 4cities, I returned closer geographically to Romania but still remained quite disconnected from the political and social life of the country. My interest and attention around the *#rezist* protests started crystallizing in Fall 2018, when I began considering the subject as part of my initial version of the master's thesis.

In May 2019 I decided to vote in the Romanian European Parliament Elections, not filling the ballot for the same event I had received from Italy, since European laws dictate I could only vote for one country's election. The results of the event were applauded by the *#rezist* movement. Furthermore, while I have not participated in the *#rezist* physical protests, or any protests for that matter as an active member, I have, however, gone to the Victory Square in Bucharest on one occasion (August 10, 2019) as an observer, as part of the research for the present paper. While I did not engage in either chanting, marching, or any of the other activities performed by the protesters, being in the middle of them, and hearing their pleas, have made me sympathetic to their cause on a personal level, after already being inclined to side with them from what the research I had already conducted revealed.

Furthermore, in the Appendix Section 7.5.1, the reader will find the full questionnaire discussed and presented in Section 4.2.2. The questions are intended to find relevant information about the participants and are meant to explore their relationship with activism in both physical and virtual spaces. Instead of providing the unfilled questionnaire, I have decided it could be of more use if I attach it filled with my answers. While I did not use my personal responses as part of this thesis, I am presenting them for any curious reader that would find that information pertinent to the way they approach my research. Since the purpose of showing my responses is to acknowledge any bias that might have affected my analysis, I had filled it to the best of my abilities anachronistically, as I would have before the research started and before I had an academic interest in the subject matter. Therefore, the filled questionnaire is showing my ideas and preconceptions unrelated to any of the research, analysis, and results produced for the present paper. If I were to fill it now, at the end of completing the thesis, there would be significant differences as my opinions are now more informed and have changed.

2.2. Preamble: A Word on Digital Citizenship and Jurisdiction

Digital citizenship does not have a clear, universally agreed upon, definition. It is sometimes simply used to describe astute internet users, while in a more sophisticated understanding of the term represents an extension of civil citizenship and is meant to spark discussion about the rights, protections, and responsibilities of people in the online realm.

With many citizens of western countries making use of the internet, governments have tried to digitalize bureaucratic processes and state services with what is referred to in the literature as *e-government*. In this case, digital citizens are to be understood as the citizens of a nation that exercise their specific citizenship through digital means, in relation to their government. Therefore, digital citizens emerge as a political figure for their respective nation,

capable of significant impact on statehood. Because these digital citizens are, in fact, citizens of that nation, governance of digital citizens becomes a state-specific responsibility (Schou and Hjelholt 2018, 507). Consequently, even in the global north, policy regarding the virtual world mainly exist only at each country's national level, despite an increasing activity and presence of citizens from around the world in the same online realm. This mismatch results in a gap between the civil, social, and political rights of digital citizens, in addition to a failure to extend the protection offered to citizens offline, equally throughout the virtual world.

While digital developments have evolved rapidly, most citizenship tenants remain the same as they were in the pre-internet era. If at first the internet was only a technological platform enabling communication, now actions and transactions on top of simple interactions are happening online, sometimes replacing the need for their physical equivalent (Dirksen 2013, 2). The current institutional and legislative framework developed for the physical space is not sufficient for the digital realm and therefore cannot be assumed to include forms of digital citizenship (M. DeLuca, Lawson, and Sun 2012, 486). The protections that citizens generally enjoy in the physical world have not been extended to include their virtual equivalents. Citizens are vulnerable when it comes to the protection of privacy or journalistic rights when attempting online acts of advocacy or activism (Dirksen 2013). In the United States specifically, a driving force for international policy, the government puts forward a rhetoric that recognizes that "cybersecurity is particularly important for activists, advocates, and journalists on the front lines who may express unpopular ideas and opinions" (The White House 2011, 24). However, in practice, the main concern for lawmakers is national security. Therefore, cyberspace legislation remains mainly underdeveloped, leaving citizens without equivalent protections online as they do in the physical realm (Dirksen 2013, 14). As the American Civil Liberties Union explains, "law enforcement agencies—both the federal government and state and city entities—are becoming increasingly aggressive in their attempts to obtain information about what people are doing on the Internet" (O'Dwyer 2015). Cyberactivism has proved that actions and processes traditionally manifested in the physical public reality, can now be replicated, strengthened, and even replaced by online equivalents (Dirksen 2013, 1). Therefore, it is worth noting that virtual spaces defy geographical boundaries of states, enabling a future of cosmopolitan individuals that see themselves defined first by memberships other than their belonging to a nation-state (Berman 2002, 166).

When referring to jurisdictions, there is traditionally a strong link with a state's monopoly over dispute settlement and an assumption of territoriality. However, the concept of jurisdiction has to be reconsidered in virtual space, due to new technologies that are able to produce trust and fast resolution of conflicts, absent before when separating the concept of jurisdiction from state-controlled territories (Marinho and Ribeiro 2017, 2). Spatial jurisdictions as we know them, have their roots in the Peace of Westphalia that defined their relationship with the nation-state. Since, the borders that define legal jurisdiction have had definitive authority, despite their ultimately arbitrary nature. Thus, the unequivocal legitimacy of territorial boundaries is a foundation for any government (Berman 2002, 113–15). The scholars challenging the status quo seek to bring forward to debate questions such as "How are conceptions of jurisdiction related to the way people experience physical space, territorial borders, distance, and community?" and "Why should the nation-state continue to be the dominant player in the field of legal jurisdiction?" (Berman 2002, 164–66). That is because the

concept of jurisdiction formed around the nation-states' sovereignty inside their fixed territorial borders is neither inevitable nor grounded in a natural phenomenon. Jurisdictions enable the law to trace the topography of spatial affiliations, ignoring other types of connections. Therefore, it is not surprising that in recent years legal conundrums appeared in regards to issues that can generally be viewed as jurisdictional in nature (Berman 2002, 164–66).

However, challenging the geographical boundaries of sovereign nation-states as no longer the only pertinent method of defining space and community in the contemporary globalized world, does not entail they have become entirely irrelevant. Geographical location and national identity are still defining factors for individuals' membership to a particular community, but they are now just two among many. (Berman 2002, 164–66) As described above, numerous recent social movements have been ignited in the virtual realm, but they took physical form as protests in urban public spaces. In the end, despite the growing importance of virtual spaces for activists, public demonstrations are not obsolete, still being regarded as "the most powerful way to collectively express dissent, to express the strength of the movement and, especially, to directly challenge the dominant power", which is in most cases a physical authority, presiding over physical space (Lim 2014, 62).

2.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Social movements can be described as a network of people that share a common objective, often with a common enemy, that come together in expressing their ideas publicly. Social movements spring from a sense of crisis, mobilizing people to enact change. However, the spaces in which social networking would traditionally take place are rapidly disappearing in the neoliberal city. Increased urbanization rates have changed urban life, taking away the quality of cities as places where people would live together as a community. In contemporary spaces, capitalism has commodified what once was public space used for civic engagement, sacrificing social cohesion. Civic spaces, understood as places where "people of different origins and walks of life can co-mingle without overt control by government, commercial or other private interests, or de facto dominance by one group over another," are becoming increasingly rare (Douglass, Ho, and Ooi 2002, 24). Therefore, virtual spaces have developed into a substitute for the above, facilitating communication and the creation of relationships; making the internet and wireless communication crucial in the current networked social movements (Castells 2013, 228). Yet, virtual spaces too are controlled by capitalistic market forces, their value being a direct correlation to their user's engagement (Lim 2014, 54).

If on a first impulse, the virtual space of the internet could be characterized as nothing more than a platform for rapidly and efficiently spreading information, and increasing coordination, a codependent relationship can form with the "streets" where activists reinforce virtual symbolism and engage in behavior meant to create content for the online space. Moreover, ease of information transmission and anonymity in the virtual space makes way for horizontal, leaderless structures, that while not always beneficial (Daubs 2017), are needed in increasingly post-political physical cities around the globe (Swyngedouw 2007), where activists must find ways to recreate the polis of debate and engagement online. To analyze what

roles online activism may play within its relationship to physical street protest, I put forward a first, general, research question:

> *RQ1. How does activism happening in virtual spaces influence the ways in which protests take place in the built environment?*

In order to identify and compare the structural elements of online and offline activism, I propose a second research question:

> *RQ2. What are the similarities and differences between virtual and physical activism in terms of theme, effectiveness, and organization?*

While the first question focuses on the relationship between physical and virtual protest, treating them as complementary parts of a unitary action, the second research question changes perspective by comparatively approaching the two actions. The first question treats online activism as a supplementary (digital) component to the preexisted (tangible) one, asking how its existence has altered the fabric of street protests, and changed the way in which the physical demonstrations are organized and perceived. The second research question places the two types of protest in a comparative framework, looking for contrast in their practice and effects - when considered as separate, even if interacting, entities. These two approaches, combined, cover a wider range of analysis, capturing both answers related to the symbiotic relationship of online and offline activism, as well as competing elements of the two approaches; leaving space not only for the possibility to discover how virtual activism aids physical demonstrations, but also revealing how digital social movements can compare and compete on their own as an alternative to traditional protests.

2.4. CONTEXT AND CASE STUDY

Many cities around the world have experienced, throughout their history, groups of people taking to the streets to voice their complaints and demand change. From the French Revolution to the Tiananmen Square protests, violent or peaceful opposition to central authorities and their practices is not a new area of academic inquiry. However, as described above, recent technological advancements allowed for the development and use of new types of spaces where people could express their grievances in the virtual realm. The case of the 2017-2019 anti-government protest in Bucharest is used, as the protesters have both occupied public squares, and made extensive use of digital platforms under the *#rezist* hashtag.

Not unlike other countries, Romania has a history spattered with revolts, rebellions, and protests ranging from the anti-foreign influence revolution of 1948 (part of the political upheavals of the same year in Europe) to the peasants demanding fair land ownership (in 1907). However, with the communist regime taking power and establishing a tight grip on freedom of speech, Romania experienced a period of bogus harmony after the crush of the pro-monarchist, anti-communist, student protest of 1945. During the communist regime, the only street movements were government-sanctioned parades in honor of the Party and the country's ruler, with choreographies inspired by the Chinese communist parades. However, with the

Revolution of 1989 (the largest, and most violent protest in Romanian recent history) the communist leader Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife were executed for genocide against the Romanian people, and democracy was (at least partially) restored. These events made way for the opportunity to protest again, and Romanians have made use of it in the last three tumultuous decades.

Even if protests do not always start in Bucharest, their epicenter shifts to the capital city as it is not only the seat of the Presidential Office, Government, and Parliament, but also the largest and most economically important city in Romania. Furthermore, throughout the urban architecture left behind by the communists, envisioned for political speeches and parades, Bucharest has large open squares in front of both the government (Victory Square) and parliament building (Constitution Square). In addition to their large size and proximity to the centers of power, the squares also have numerous roads of access converging towards them, making them hard for authorities to control, but ideal for protesters to gather in (Cowan 2004). Following the anti-communist revolution, a series of "Mineriads" saw the ruling party call upon coal miners to (allegedly) violently disperse the anti-government protesters on several instances, from 1990 to 1999. More recently, protesters went to the streets to object tax increases and benefits decreases in 2012, feeling the effects of the 2007-2008 global crisis, and then again in 2015 when a club without the proper functioning licenses caught fire and killed 64 patrons. The name of the club that burned down was the first notable instance of a hashtag being used consistently with a Romanian protest, as *#colectiv* became a symbol of mourning and sobriety. However, the most recent anti-government protests, that started in 2017, are unique because they are said to have used social media in a way and at a scale that has not been seen before for protests in Romania. Unified under the *#rezist* hashtag the protesters used digital platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to coordinate, engage, and spread their message.

The *#rezist* movement was initiated by a Romanian NGO named DeClic, that claims to represent the civic society. The NGO states on its website that it considers itself to be part of a global community of activists, so perhaps it is not surprising that the name adopted for the anti-corruption movement was the translation of the already ongoing *#rezist* activism campaign that was happening in the United States against their president. However, the Romanian resistance is not a branch of the original States' side movement, but a collective action undertaken by Romanians, and forged to their own needs and grievances. For example, the *#rezist* activists supported the Romanian president (from the right-liberal party PNL) and condemned the government (ran by the left-conservative party Partidul Social Democrat, abbreviated as PSD and translated to the Social Democratic Party). Furthermore, the igniting factor for the protests was local corruption, with the demonstration having started when the government drafted a law that would change the penal code and (arguably) help corrupt politicians escape harsh sentences. Having some types of non-violent crimes decriminalized, they would remain illegal, but punishable by fines, instead of prison sentences. While the legal aspect of the proposed law has been up for debate in Romania, with both sides claiming it would apply in different ways, the matter remains complicated, especially with the constant amendments and changes the form of the drafted bill has had. Nevertheless, what is noteworthy for the purpose of this paper is to acknowledge that the *#rezist* protesters continue to remain unsatisfied with the results, even if they believe they have made some progress in delaying the law and putting pressure that lead to positive changes in the written text of the bill.

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3. Theoretical Concepts and Literature Review

This section is divided into three subsections offering an overview of the discussion surrounding the concepts that form the basis of my analysis frame. Firstly, I explore theories and concerns of scholars writing about pre-digital social movements, that manifest purely in the physical space. After, I continue by investigating online activism and the use of digital spaces for protest. Finally, I conclude by presenting an overview of the literature on social network analysis, in relation to the previous concept.

3.1. Storming the Public Squares: Protesting in the City

Cities have been (and continue to be even in the digital age) the central foci of social movements. Therefore, questions of place and space are intertwined to all other protest-related inquiries. In addition to *where*, an understanding of *why* and *how* protests spark, evolve, and either succeed or fail, will be valuable for comprehending what virtual spaces can (and cannot) achieve when used by online activists in their attempt to effect physical world changes. Finally, while not the focus of this study, a brief overview of pre-digital social movement theory, relevant to current online activism, is necessary as a basis for understanding the context from which the digitally-focused literature and research to follow emerged.

Before diving into the inner-workings of protest, it is perhaps relevant to contemplate the (sometimes unexplored, yet significant) role that geography plays when discussing social movements. To this purpose, Nicholls and his colleagues (2008; 2009; Uitermark, and Loopmans 2012), provide the pertinent literature when, until recently as he claims, other "geographers have been rather slow to analyze the specific processes and mechanisms that make it possible for people to cooperate and engage in sustained political struggles with rich and powerful adversaries" (2007, 607). However, the idea that geography matters is not novel and, as Nicholls explains, Marx, Engels, and Lenin considered the urban space a beneficial environment for socialist revolutions, viewing it in contrast to rural area where people would be more inclined to accept an authoritarian rule and the "peasant life weakened social bonds" (2008, 856). In Nicholas's view, cities can be a fertile breeding ground for contention depending on their density, size, and level of diversity. All else equal, the more crowded a city is, the higher the chances over a certain space for protests to erupt. Similarly, the larger a city is, the more likely a protest is to gather sufficient numbers of people to sustain itself. Lastly, increased diversity relates to opportunity for conflict to erupt over competing ideas and needs, but also for unlikely ties to form. Therefore, dissent "emerges from the micro-interactions between large numbers of diverse people living in close proximity" (Uitermark, Nicholls, and Loopmans 2012, 2546). However, places are not to only be defined by their size, density, and diversity. The particular qualities a place possesses also affects the "shape of social networks that emerge within it" (Nicholls 2009, 91). The type of resources the actors possess and the strength of ties the actors form, contribute to the creation of the network structure of a social movement. Proximity of place breeds strong relations enabled by shared norms and emotions. These, in turn, cultivate the trust associated with mobilizing the scare and valuable resources needed for treacherous political ventures. However, weak ties are not to be dismissed either, as they connect the network to diverse groups and expose it to the circulation of innovative ideas (Nicholls 2009). Concisely, cities spark social movements because of the large mixture of grievances expressed by their citizens, and low coordination costs for activists due to close

proximity to one another. Urban spaces foster linkage opportunities, enabling tie formation, but they also act as foci of power that reject and represses social movements. Researchers should therefore be responsible with analyzing the reasons and timing of protest formation, just as much as they should be concerned with the places and spaces where contention erupts, paying attention to "local relations" and drawing connections to "broader struggles that extend beyond the local level" (Uitermark, Nicholls, and Loopmans 2012, 2550).

While cities enable dissent formation and manifestation, they are also central to the development and enforcing of control techniques. Different level of the state, from local to supranational, have used cities as the main grounds for suppressing and controlling the grassroots displays of resistance. Because cities are, as argued above, the most susceptible places for protest, they are also at the forefront of governmental and corporate aspiration for order in the social and political spheres. Practices such as "repression, surveillance, clientelism, corporatism, and participatory and citizenship initiatives" all represent, from hard to soft, methods of decreasing local unsanctioned urban unrest (Uitermark, Nicholls, and Loopmans 2012, 2546). A combination of these strategies results in a dual, complementary, nature of cities as breeding grounds for innovation both in dissent manifestation and reactionary or preemptive control meant to regulate, order, disperse and absorb the discontent sparking from social life.

The modern (but still pre-digital) study of social movements emerged out of the social movements of the 1960s, reorienting the field. Before, the focus of social movement analyses was to understand individual participation, with explanations pointing towards a rapid increase in individual grievances. These traditional theories assumed that participants in a movement were rare, irrational, and distinct from any institutional actors (Jenkins 1983). In contrast, the new models argue for rational actors within social movements, that respond to the expected rewards and risks of different types of actions, and have goals related to change in power structures. Movements are formed primarily not in response to the appearance of new grievances, but when resources are available, and organizational conditions are favorable. Finally, centralized social movements with a formal structure were believed to be better equipped for gathering the needed resources, with their success dependent on strategic factors (Jenkins 1983).

Social movements can be considered "fuzzy" phenomena or "moving targets," and therefore searching for a precise definition would be "wasted energy" (Berger and Nehring 2017, 39–40). Yet, various scholars have established their own defining criteria, attempting to work within its bounds to understand and describe social movements. Traditionally, the definition for social movements includes noninstitutionalized, minimally organized, collective actions striving for (or opposing) change (Wilkinson 1971). By the same definition, social movements can be introspective (as in the case of sects, cults, or communes) or outward-looking (targeting institutional changes), acting in practice as an extension of basic forms of collective action (Jenkins 1983). Newer definitions are narrower, with social movements being considered extensions of institutionalized actions. Scholars (particularly those interested in resource mobilization) focus only on collective actions that strived to effect institutional changes by organizing (previously unorganized) groups of people in the face of elites (Gamson 1990, 16,17,18), or acting in the interest of those excluded from political debate.

Traditionally still, the central focus of inquiry into social movements has been finding the answer to *why* social movements form (leaving the questions of *where* and *how* movements emerge disproportionately unexplored; commonly in regards to physical spaces but now also relevant to digital spaces). The proposed answer has generally been related to rapid increases short-term dissatisfaction with unexpected social change. Alternatively, proponents of resource mobilization theories have presented a model where grievances formed from structural institutional practices, and therefore are relatively constant and only secondary to social movement formation (Jenkins 1983). Instead, they argue that availability of group resources and opportunity for efficient organization and collective action are more important (Jenkins and Perrow 1977; Tilly 1978). McCarthy and Zald (1973, 13), in an entrepreneurial model for social movement formation, particularly highlight the importance of availability of resources, especially availability of organizing spaces and movement leaders, stating that "the definition of grievances will expand to meet the funds and support personnel available." While there is a certain degree of consensus that resources are valuable, the debate is built around the types and sources of the most valuable resources. Traditionally, researchers believed that resources were gathered from those directly benefiting from the changes demanded. Therefore, since social movements generally lie outside the framework of institutionalized politics, noninstitutional sources had to provide the bulk of resources. McCarthy and Zald (1973; 1977) however, theorized that the US demonstrations of the 1960s and 1970s had awoken the moral sense of the upper and middle class (including college students), and relied on resources from institutions (e.g. "private foundations, social welfare institutions, the mass media, universities, governmental agencies, and even business corporations" (Jenkins 1983, 533)).

Another primary goal of literature on pre-digital social movements is determining the effectiveness of protests on a political scale and analyzing the mechanisms through which a movement succeeds in gathering the resources needed to achieve its stated objectives (Jenkins 1983; McCarthy and Zald 1977). In terms of methods of protest, general unruliness appears to

Figure 1. Political caricature from the Economist (2013) summarizing more than two centuries of social movements, from the French Revolution to hashtag activism

be effective, but there are no clear forms of disruption that stand out as being ideal regardless of context (Jenkins 1983).

In contrast, as it will be revealed in the parts to follow, online activism can also be evaluated according to its capacity to attain symbolic power through the spread of its ideas, rather than only through the achievement of material goals. As Thompson (2005, 50) explains, what also matters is "the capacity [of a networked social movement] to intervene in the course of events and influence the actions of others by means of the production and transmission of symbolic forms." In the absence of networked digital platforms, scholars generally agree that social movements had to rely almost exclusively on their ability to get press coverage, in order to gain visibility (Andrews and Caren 2010). Before social media, mass media coverage was instrumental to the general public, as well as to elites, in informing about social movement activity. Furthermore, the mass media acted, almost exclusively, as the creator of a movement's image, and acted as a barometer for its morale. However, press coverage is dependent on the structure, goals, and ownership of the media organizations. The problematic effects of censorship are not only reserved to authoritarian regimes (a topic that will be explored more in-depth in the next section), with selective news coverage and misleading framing happening around the world (Jenkins 1983). For example, the Nixon administration put pressure on national news organizations in the early 1970s, to curtail their coverage of protests happening in the United States (Hodgson 1976, 374–76).

3.2. Like and Share if You Agree: Protesting Online

Similarly to how the scholars of the previous section argued for the emergence of a new understanding of social movements after the 1970s, when the labor movements no longer represented the epicenter of social conflict within "a post-materialist and potentially post-industrial society", now, yet again, a new type of social movement arrives alongside the age of globalization (Berger and Nehring 2017, 1). Digital communication networks are increasingly presumed components for the success of protests nowadays. From the offline benefits of online networking in a movement led by students demanding a living wage (Biddix and Han Woo Park 2008), to the so-called *Twitter Revolutions* meant to bring down oppressive regimes, there are undeniable (even if sometimes overestimated) benefits to online activism (Morozov 2011). While the Internet is a necessity for networked social movements, it is, however, not a sufficient component for their collective action. Digital social platforms are instrumental in the organization and mobilization of movements, yet "the role of the Internet goes beyond instrumentality" as it enables for a "form of shared practice that allows a leaderless movement to survive, deliberate, coordinate and expand" (Castells 2013, 229). The digital sphere protects the movement against "the repression of their liberated physical spaces" by enabling their members to communicate with one another and with the rest of the society on the steep path of social change needed to fight against institutionalized domination (Castells 2013, 229). Yet, physical urban spaces and virtual spaces are complementarily needed for contemporary social movements. Both can be transformed into "spaces of hope" for people to engage with established power structures and demonstrate their political agency through insurgent movements (Lim 2014; Harvey 2000). Virtual spaces provide people with inexpensive networking and idea diffusion opportunities, while physical spaces directly engage with power

structures. Occupy Wall Street is one of the best examples of what is known as hashtag activism because, besides having "created physical and political space for reasserting the power of the people" by "claiming their right to the city", it also showcased how contemporary social movements are evolving by combining traditional methods of organizing with new technological tools in order to voice their concerns (Lubin 2012, 185).

On September 17, 2011, New York City's Zuccotti Park was taken over by almost a thousand protestors rising up against "corporate power, political corruption, and economic inequality" trumping over popular interests. The movement's participants were united and organized not under a hierarchical structure but as the 99% fighting against the injustices of the global elites (Lubin 2012, 184). The protesters proved that by occupying both public physical spaces and virtual space on social media to articulate their claims, resistance, first configured for virtual audiences, translated into an urban social movement (Lubin 2012, 184). In the age in which "revolutions are tweeted and televised," the Occupy movement was one of the first to prove that urban protests can transcend their physical forms, and also efficiently manifest in virtual spaces (Lubin 2012, 185).

One of the movement's particularly unique features was its horizontal, leaderless structure (Lubin 2012, 185). Unlike other movements, Occupy Wall Street's message was widely circulated and meaningfully received by significant audiences over a long period of time, increasingly amplified. The movement was recognized as a threat by the government and corporations that wanted to preserve their status quo by steering the public narratives. Therefore, the protesters of the movement could not simply be ignored and ridiculed but had to be silenced. After the failed attempt to render the online anti-corporate voice of the movement as incoherent by the mainstream media, the "dominant group" employed instruments of "hard persuasion": arrests, harassments, beatings, and finally an assault on all camped protesters that "saw the media censored and sequestered, at night, in the dark, with no filmed images, and all subway stations and street access blocked" (Leary 20151201). The day after the camp out was destroyed, the mayor of New York, Mike Bloomberg, declared that Occupy Wall Street was "an intolerable situation" where "inaction was not an option" (Halbfinger and Barbaro 2011).

There are also cases where the protests originally started offline and retreated online. For example, in the spring of 2011, protesters occupied public squares across southern Europe, in response to the global financial crisis that prompted austerity measures. However, by the summer, "most of the public squares had been violently evacuated by the police." Citizens did not abandon their cause, but instead "joined forces in online environments" adding to their list of demands "real democracy" (McCosker, Vivienne, and Johns 2016, 97). With public space disappearing and being tightly controlled in the neoliberal city, people are forced into exile in digital public spaces. Similarly, only a year later, in 2012, the *#BlackLivesMatter* or *#BLM* hashtag started circulating on Twitter to draw attention to the racial injustices of policing in the United States. The movement had a significant boost after numerous celebrities (i.e., influencers) used the hashtag on their social media platforms. Again, in this case, injustices happening in the physical space were criticized in the virtual space, with an amplified voice (Duvall and Heckemeyer 2018).

For all the enthusiasm and faith some people place in the power of online activism, there are also many who have met with skepticism the idea that social media activism could hold to the promise of toppling down autocratic regimes (Tremayne 2014). Christensen (2011) and Morozov (2011) argue that those who advocate for the benefits of technology within social movements are likely to be biased in their judgment and *internet-centric* because they are commonly involved themselves in the online activism efforts. Moreover, as discussed above, despite the protests having been "symbolically mediated through the social media tropes associated with the decentralization of power," the Internet as an egalitarian space is a myth, and in fact, not everyone can communicate as equals (Daubs 2017, 367). Morozov (2011) explains how online technologies regarded as useful by users living in a free society, can be hijacked by dictators or police states, and be used for the surveillance and arrest of protesters active online. Therefore, there are concerns with the centralization of digital platforms when it comes to the ability of repressive authorities to intimidate, silence, or control activists.

Under authoritarian regimes, where physical spaces are policed, and organizations such as labor unions are destroyed, virtual spaces can potentially help activists to organize and diffuse their agenda. Yet, internet crackdowns by the government are routinely enforced to varying degrees of success (Lim 2014, 57–63). For example, the Iranian government blocked access to websites and shot down phone service during the protests of 2009 (Faris, Palfrey, and Etling 2009). Furthermore, Morozov (2011, 30) argues that after the incident in Iran, Chinese authorities took preemptive measures to curtail the potential of online activism facilitated by American technology companies, and suspected Washington's involvement lead to "carefully staged affairs," rather than spontaneous movements. Despite the internet, as a technology, being decentralized and thus "embodying the culture of freedom," the platforms built on top of it are not. Even if the original design of the internet was as a "computer communication network able to withstand control from any command center", giants such as Twitter and Facebook are private corporations able to control online narratives from their oligopoly position, meaning that even in nations which are relatively free from government oppression, users can still be silenced by those in charge of the platforms used for online activism (Castells 2013, 231; Daubs 2017, 370).

Moreover, digital platforms could also be used to influence the general public by pushing propaganda and spreading misinformation. As the Cambridge Analytica scandal revealed, data is now just as valuable (if not more) as salt, spices, silk, or even gold once were. In short, the scandal revolved around the Trump 2016 presidential campaign who hired Cambridge Analytica to target key audiences with tailored-to-their-fears news articles. On the one hand, Facebook was accused of negligence for not being able to properly curate its platform, allowing "fake news." On the other hand, in 2014, Facebook allegedly breached the privacy rights of its users by not adequately protecting their data from being harvested. Through a personality quiz Facebook app downloaded by 270 thousand people (who got rewarded with a few dollars for submitting the quiz), a lecturer later to join Cambridge Analytica, gathered the data of 87 million users (most being US voters), by gaining access to the original users' friend lists (*Wired* 2018). Even if Facebook could claim ignorance, denying abetting, this situation should still be inadmissible for a private company that controls the data of five billion users, often knowing more about their lives than their respective governments. This is especially true when the data in question was allegedly used to skew the result of the elections in the United

States, one of the oldest and largest democracies in the world (Lewis and Hilder 2018; Wood 2017). In an undercover journalistic investigation done by Channel 4, Mark Turnbull, a senior figure for Cambridge Analytica bragged about the successful election meddling the company had done for various political forces around the world, explained how "it's no good fighting an election campaign on the facts, because actually, it's all about emotion" (Isaak and Hanna 2018; Channel 4 News 2018). In the aftermath of the scandal, most notably, Cambridge Analytica closed, several people involved were imprisoned, and Facebook receive a record five billion dollars fine from The Federal Trade Commission (*BBC News* 2019).

Quartz | qz.com
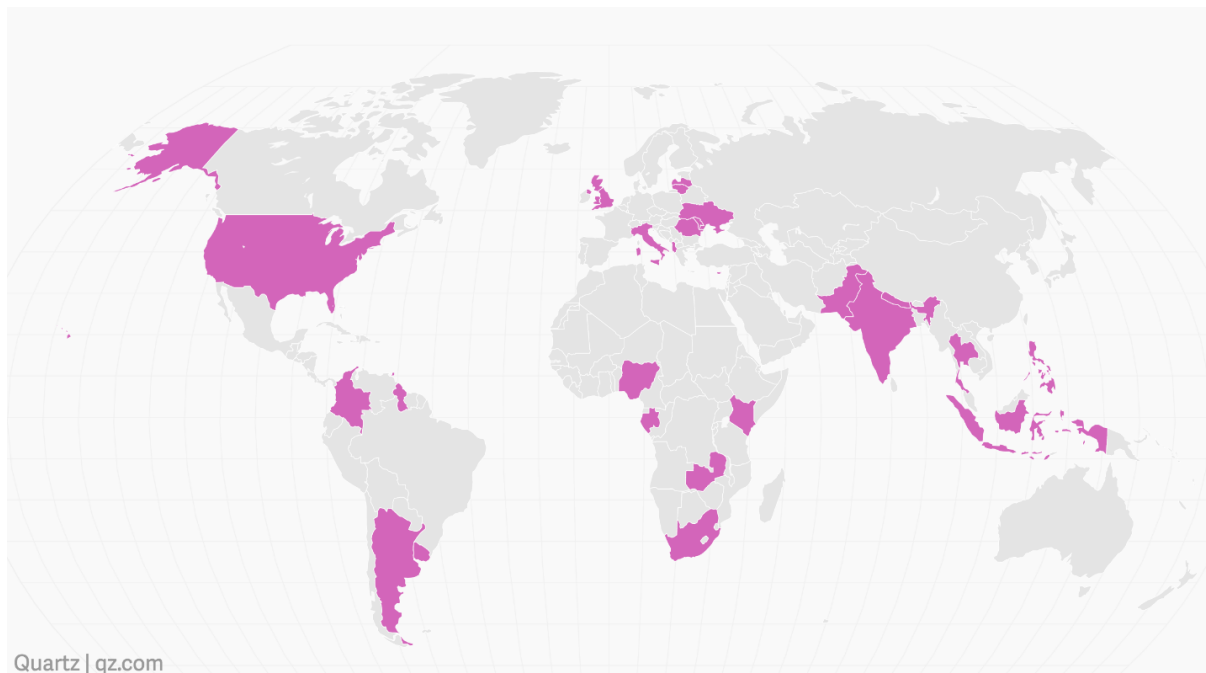
Figure 2. Map of countries where SCL Elections, the parent company of Cambridge Analytica, provided its services. Their self-proclaimed track record includes more than 100 election campaigns in over 30 countries spanning five continents. Romania is included on the list, but it is unclear who contracted their services or for which political event (Ghoshal 2018; Tupa 2019).

Finally, there is an argument that suggests online platforms enabled "feel-good activism" or "slacktivism" that has very limited (if at all) social or political impact (Morozov 2011). Unconvinced by the idea that visibility is critical in obtaining symbolic power, which in turn enables rapid information diffusion at a large scale (Castells 2007; Thompson 2005), the critics target actions such as *liking* and *sharing* of activism posts, or sending "thoughts and prayers", arguing that these actions give people a false sense of accomplishment used to overlook more effective

Figure 3. Doctored satirical image showing a woman and child receiving help in the form of Facebook likes.

solutions such as boycotts or protests. The satire website Waterford Whispers News (2013) cleverly captured this feeling by publishing an article titled "Mother Of Sick Child Finally Receives Vital Facebook Likes Needed For Operation" alongside the photo in Figure 3.

3.3. ANALYZING AND MAPPING INFORMATION NETWORKS

Twitter gave birth to a simple, yet powerful, method of linking together people interested in the same ideas by embedding tweets with @mentions and #hashtags. These actions can be considered scale shifting mechanisms as they have the potential of transforming an idea into a movement by diffusion (Mcadam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2003; Tilly and Tarrow 2015). McAdam et al. (2003) argue that in order for a movement to achieve success it often involves scale shifting, in a process that converts localized efforts by a small group of people. The diffusion not only occurs over already-existing paths of interaction, but also paves the way for new lines of connectedness (Mcadam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2003; Tilly and Tarrow 2015). Still, perhaps more than other types of networks, online networks are dynamic, and thus the connections between the nodes in the network can change as the network itself grows and evolves with the mentions, hashtags, and follows being the elements that create connections between different Twitter users (see Figure 4). While other social media platforms emulate preexisting, offline, social networks (e.g., Facebook discourages users sending friend requests to people they don't already know) or require the users to previously be engaged with the content creator (e.g. Instagram), Twitter possesses what is described by Segerberg and Bennett (2011, 203) as "crosscutting network mechanisms" that can use only an idea or a shared interest to bridge over diverse backgrounds or "temporal and spatial regions" to bring people together. Therefore, Tremayne (2014, 113) argues, mapping and analyzing the Twitter network involved in actions of online activism has the potential to reveal "important features of the movement's composition, organization and evolution." Existing studies analyze hashtag use within online social movements, and generally focus on the ability to gain momentum through the diffusion of hashtags. Lotan et al. (2011) reveal that Twitter users in Egypt and Tunisia rallied behind *#sidibouzid* during the Arab Spring. In the case of Bangladesh, Zamir (2014) studies how the hashtag *#shahbag* was used for the diffusion of protest-related information, and maps the user network around the hashtag to reveal diffusion patters and influential online activists.
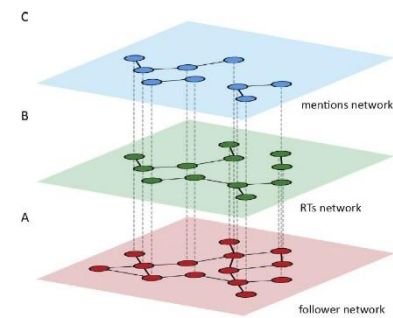
Figure 4. Schematic representation of networked analysis (González-Bailón and Wang 2016)

Essential to the analysis of social networks (with online social networks being no exception) is the concept of network centrality. While there are several ways to measure network centrality (A. Hanneman and Riddle 2005), Tremayne (2014) argues for the use of four in order to analyze Twitter activity related to activism. A user's connectedness with other users through messages sent is defined as *out-degree centrality*, with a node (user) scoring high by sending messages to many unique nodes. *In-degree centrality* measures the importance in a network (A. Hanneman and Riddle 2005) by analyzing how many messages a node receives (through mentions). *Betweenness centrality* is important for channeling information, and measures the probability of a node to broker the connection between two other nodes. Finally, *eigenvector centrality* uses a slightly more complex approach by not only considering the raw number of connections a node has with other nodes, but also by assessing the importance of those other nodes within the network (A. Hanneman and Riddle 2005).

Another concept is introduced by Wang, Liu, and Gao who suggest that members of social movements might strategically use hashtag popularity in order to better diffuse their message, increase its virality, and enhance the visibility of the movement by engaging larger, more diverse, numbers of users. In their analysis, they define *co-occurrence* as the appearance of "any pair of hashtags used together in the same tweet" and construct a hashtag co-occurrence network in order to analyze the use patterns (Wang, Liu, and Gao 2016, 40:857). For example, if one would like to find out the interest in ice-cream flavors on twitter in a particular day, they should look not only at the number of occurrences of the *#chocolateicecream* and *#vanillaicecream* hashtags, but also at the number of the co-occurrences of the #chocolate or *#vanilla*, and *#icecream* hashtags within a single tweet. If two hashtags appear within the same tweet, a tie is formed; the strength of the tie is determined by the number of unique tweets that use the hashtag pair.

4. RESEARCH METHODS, DATA ANALYSIS, AND LIMITATIONS

4.1. RESEARCHING PERCEPTIONS: QUALITATIVE METHODS

4.1.1. EXPLORATORY RESEARCH AND SECONDARY DATA

Before delving into the more well-defined research methods bellow, I will start by presenting the longest and fuzziest of my methods, used continuously throughout the thesis writing process to develop and maintain my up-to-date understanding of the events and context of the case study, with the *#rezist* movement still ongoing. As opposed to the structured methodology to follow, the exploratory research and secondary data analysis had a large and mixed number of sources, my aim being to assure I do not miss some critical piece of information that I would have otherwise ignored if only stricter methodological approaches were used. The results of this methodological approach can be predominantly found in Section 5.1 (#Rezist: Overview of the Context and Events) and Section 5.2 (Actor Mapping and Timeline)

Not having been well informed about the Romanian political and social scene when starting this research, I had to conduct the exploratory phase by relying on printed journals, online media outlets, and TV broadcasts, in an attempt to gain a holistic understanding of the *#rezist* movement. Seeing signs early on that both sides were accusing one another of presenting their public with a one-sided argument at best, and of spreading misinformation at worst, I realized that it was necessary to tap into all information channels, from the most reputable to the least credible. The Romanian TV channels I have watched for political coverage were Antena 3 and Romania TV (said to be favoring PSD) and Realitatea TV and DIGI (believed to be siding with #rezist), names that later came up in the interviews as well. Online, there was a broader pallet of secondary information available, and I have tried to comb through a myriad of sources; from journalists' personal blogs (e.g., lucianmindruta.com), to YouTube amateur videos of the protests, and international established news organizations such as the BBC. I have also made a habit of checking the *#rezist* related Facebook pages and looking at the top tweets for the #rezist hashtag throughout the course of my research.

Besides merely reading or listening to information flows, I have also engaged in informal, personal, discussions with friends and family around the topic of the *#rezist* protests, further informing myself about the broader context of the events. Moreover, on August 10, 2019, I

have gone to Victory Square in Bucharest, where I have observed the scheduled protest bring together 24.000 people. While the event was one of the smallest, compared to the previous ones, it was still a fascinating (in not also valuable) experience to walk in between the protesters, immersing myself in the crowd, rather than just reading about it the next day.

In terms of limitations, as the approach was not structured, there are not many I can recognize, other than perhaps not being able to amass as much information related to *#rezist* as the entirety of all people and parties involved would produce every day; which means that despite my best efforts to sample each information channel and involve myself in the subject matter, it is, of course, an incomplete process. Furthermore, with other research methods, structure also allowed me to keep my professional distance more efficiently (there is no bias in counting hashtagged tweets). However, with qualitative methods in general, and the ones described in this section in particular, I did find myself feeling personally involved in the matter, and, as I explained more at length in Section 2.1, found myself agreeing with the protesters on most issues. Yet, as my inquiry investigates the relationship of virtual and physical spaces as used by the *#rezist* movement, and not the activists' grievances per se, the bias constraints pertaining to my results should be minimal.

4.1.2. INTERVIEWS

The qualitative interviews are meant to supplement, not replace the research done through other methods. Unlike the questionnaire discussed below, a quantitative research method, the interviews are meant to focus on a select few interviewees, and let them "tell their own story" through open-ended questions, rather than have them answer punctual prompts. Throughout these interviews I am aiming for 20-30 minutes of discussion encouraged through the questions outlined in Appendix Sections 7.3.1 and 7.3.2 where I am presenting the two interview guides; one designed for protesters, while the other designed for an expert. The questions in the interview guides correspond to a semi-structured discussion and are only starting points for the conversation. Depending on the interviewee, their willingness and disposition to answer questions, and the general mood of the discussion, some of the points in the guide can be changed, abbreviated, or outright skipped, if deemed irrelevant or counterproductive to the rest of the interview.

In order to make the respondents feel more comfortable and able to express themselves accurately, I have prepared a Romanian version of the talking points. In this way, I was able to offer the option for the interviews to be conducted in Romanian. However, all the three people I spoke to were confident enough to be having the conversation in English, and therefore, you will find the original, untranslated, transcripts in Section 7.3.3 of the Appendix.

The first interview I conducted was with a high school colleague that I long knew was involved in Romanian activist movements: from Roșia Montană, to Colectiv, to #rezist (see Appendix Section 7.1). Dragoș Hagiu is now a resident doctor in France where he moved at the end of 2017 but returns to his native city of Bucharest several times a year. Still, given the distance when I had contacted him, I have conducted the interview over the phone.

The second interview I conducted also followed the "activist" guidelines (Section 7.3.1) as the first, even though, as I would find throughout the discussion, the responder could be considered an expert. I have reached out to Marius Deaconu on Facebook, where we are connected since middle school when we both used to go to the Astronomy Olympiad, seeing he is consistently on my list of friends that had interacted with #rezist pages and groups on Facebook. Deaconu was formerly the president of ANSOR (Alianța Națională a Organizațiilor Studențești din Romania, The National Alliance of Student Organizations in Romania) quality in which he attended a meeting with the Prime Minister Tudose during his involvement with *#rezist*. He is currently pursuing his Doctorate in Contemporary History at the University of Bucharest. Due to Deaconu's involvement with #rezist, he was able to put me in contact with the third interviewee, a known actor in the landscape of Romanian activist movements.

For the third and final interview, I talked to Florin Bădiță, the founder of the Corupția Ucide Facebook page (Corruption Kills, 127.000 likes). Since 2016 when he started the page, Bădiță was invited to speak at TEDx talks about activism, was named one of Forbes "30 Under 30" for Law and Policy in 2018, and was awarded the title of "European Personality of the Year" by EuroNews - also in 2018. The controversial activist also made headlines for organizing the "No Pants Day" in the Bucharest metro and, in March 2019, made "breaking news" by wearing mountain boots during a meeting with the President Klaus Iohannis at the Cotroceni Palace (EcoPolitic.ro 2019).

4.2. Researching the Process: Quantitative Methods
4.2.1. Information Networks and Raw Data Analysis

This part of my analysis is, as the title of the section suggests, the most data-driven one, with the highest level of technicalities involved. Here, the numbers are impartial, publicly available, and ready for gathering and analysis through the proper tools.

With this framework in mind, the first step, in a longer process, is to gather the Twitter data related to the *#rezist* movement. After extensive online research, the platform and tool for analyzing Twitter data that stood out as most relevant to my research was Pulsar. Being more than a simple graphical interface tapping into Twitter's API (Application programming interface), Pulsar prides itself as providing "data-driven social media insights by leveraging the power of AI & data visualization in our owned-media analytics, trends, and social listening tools." As a brief example of the capabilities of the platform, one of their blog articles analyzes and maps the mechanisms that make videos go viral (Hawes 2016). As shown in Figure 5 the Dove campaign originates from Dove's account as the central foci of its virality, while the Turkish protests have a more uniform diffusion pattern with numerous medium-sized central foci that spread information around them. The article concludes that "it turns out there's not a single model of virality. Instead, different types of videos spread in different ways. Different types of content appeal to different audiences and the structure of these audiences is what shapes the viral diffusion" (Hawes 2016).
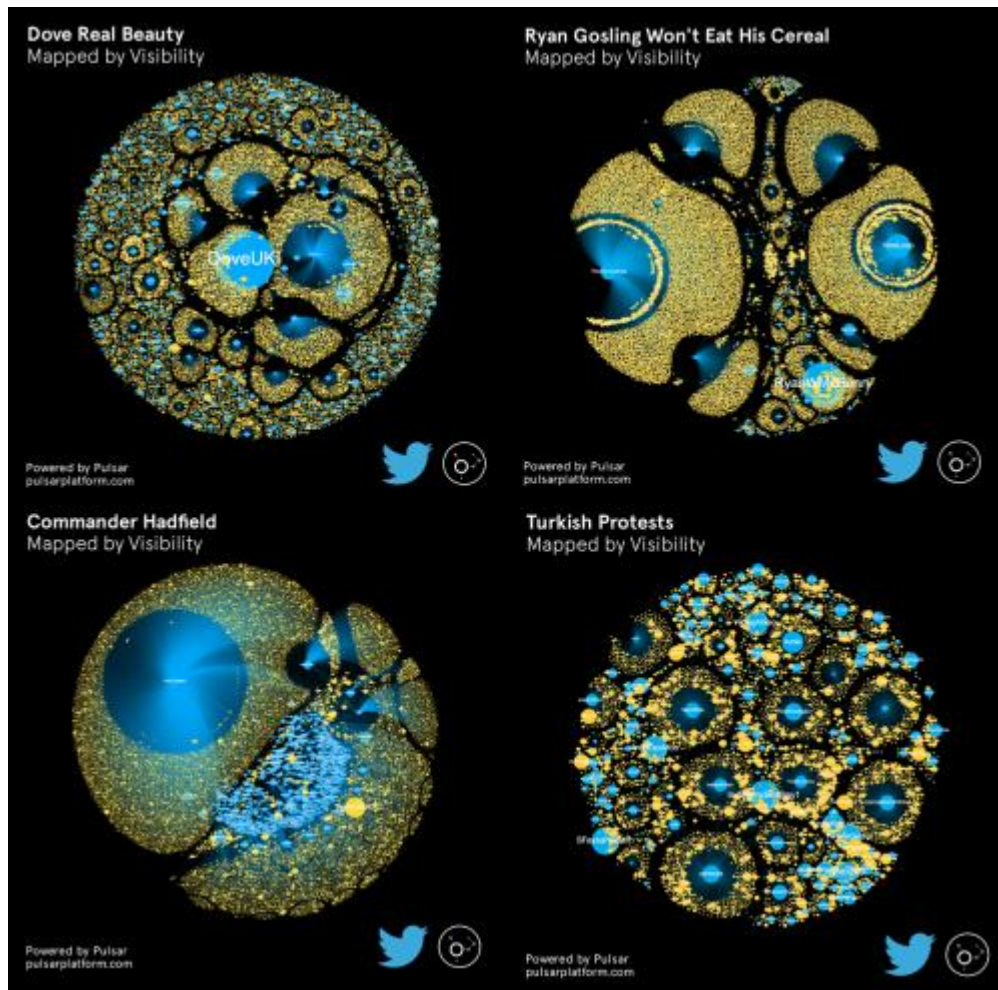
Figure 5. Twitter Viral Video Network Maps (Hawes 2016)

Interested in these types of tools, I have reached out to Pulsar and requested a demo. After a few email exchanges and a call with one of their friendly and helpful Business Development Executive, Archie Dunlop, I've learned that the resources needed in order to gather and process data as shown in the article above, would require I had a study grant I would be able to access for such an endeavor. However, Pulsar generously offered me access free of charge to their "Trends" tool for academic purposes, on the condition that I properly watermark the graphs taken from their platform and link the website www.pulsarplatform.com here, in my thesis. While not as powerful as their more advanced tools, "Trends" is able to provide historical, daily, data on the number of tweets sent including a particular hashtag or group of hashtags. For groups of hashtags the connector "AND" can be used to request tweets that contain ALL the named hashtags, or the connecter "OR" can be used to request tweets that contain ANY of the named hashtags. The results are graphed on the Pulsar website and can also be downloaded as an XLS file in order to be further processed in compatible programs such as Microsoft Office Excel.

After running a number of queries over different periods of time and using different hashtag combinations, also relying on some of the information already gathered through qualitative methods, I have decided that what would be of most use is to compile a dataset of each tweet sent using the hashtag *#rezist* from January 1 2017 to August 15 2019. Since Pulsar only provides 1 year of data at a time, I have downloaded the data in 3 periods: 2017, 2018,

and 2019 and combined the absolute number of tweets sent each day (957 in total) into one spreadsheet. The first set, of the two datasets I have further requested, pertained to tweets with the hashtag #muiePSD, while the second set collected the numbers of all tweets containing any of the hashtags "#gratiere OR #amnistitie OR #coruptiaucide OR #tineriada OR #revolutie OR #piatavictoriei OR #nugratiere OR #nugratierii OR #nuamnistitie OR #nuamnistitiei OR #mafiaPSD OR #faraviolenta OR #legeaamnistitiei OR #legeagratierii OR #abrogare OR #nucoruptie OR #protestRomania " (referred to from now for simplicity as "group of hashtags" or "hashtag group"). The final dataset contained any of the hashtags above (#rezist, #muiePSD and the group of hashtags, connected through "OR") and its number is referred to, moving forward, as "total tweets" or simply "tweets."

The *#rezist* hashtag is an obvious choice for the query described above, but let us explore why I have also chosen the others. As explained above from the paper by Wang, Liu, and Gao (2016), the co-occurrence of hashtags is an essential element to give attention to. While hashtags such as #rezist, #Romania, and #protest had high co-occurrence in tweets that also included #rezist, analyzing those would be counterproductive since, for example, the word protest has the same meaning and spelling both in English and Romanian. Therefore, when scraping for #protest data, I would have captured all the tweets, on an international scale, that debate protests, and not just the ones referring to Romania. Similarly, more than just the #rezist protests were associated with #Romania. Other topics such as sports or tourism also often included that hashtag. Pulsar does offer the option to limit the search to a precise geographical location (i.e., country), but in that case the tweets need to have geolocation data, a feature that many users prefer not to use due to privacy concerns. Moreover, if I would have limited my search to tweets only sent out of Romania, I would have failed to account for the Romanian diaspora spread throughout Europe and beyond, a voice that was very vocal as part of the resistance protests. According to the Romanian Minister for Citizens Living Abroad, almost 5 million Romanians officially live outside of the country, with another 1 to 3 additional million unregistered emigrants (Ziua Veche 2013). These numbers are significant for a total population of 19.5 million Romanians living inside their country's borders (Institutul Național de Statistică 2019).

Therefore #muiePSD was not necessarily the most used hashtag in co-occurrence with #rezist, but it seemed to be one of the most used hashtags that did not trigger false positives (tweets that included it, but were completely unrelated to the protest). The hashtag itself is composed of a vulgar Romanian term directed against PSD, the ruling political party. Since its translation has obscene connotations and is not pertinent to this research, I will not be providing it, but the reader should be able to easily find it if they have the curiosity. For this reason, I will use #m**ePSD for my own writing comfort moving forward. The other group of hashtags were all also associated with the protests but were used more sporadically, and overall fewer times, even when all combined. Still, I believed it is diligent to including them in the analysis. Their translations are, in the order presented above: pardon, amnesty, corruption kills, young people's revolt, revolution, Victory Square, no pardon, no to the pardon, no amnesty, no to the amnesty, PSD mafia, without violence, amnesty law, pardon law, abolishment, no corruption, protest Romania.

In order to avoid double counting of a tweet (that included, for example, both #rezist and #protestRomania) I did not add the number of #rezist tweets to the number of the other hashtag tweets to obtain their total number. Instead, I ran three other queries (for the same 2017, 2018, and 2019 periods), including all hashtag terms with the operator "OR" in between them, after which, as before, compiled the three periods. As part of my data processing, I also computed hashtag overlap by summing up the tweets that would result in double-counting divided by the number of total tweets collected separately. Where V is the percentage of overlap, T_r is the total number of tweets including #rezist over the time period, T_m is the total number of tweets including #m**ePSD over the time period, and T_g is the total number of tweets including any of the group hashtags over the time period, and T_t is the number of total tweets including any of the hashtags:

$$V = \left(1 - \frac{T_r + T_m + T_g}{T_t}\right) \times 100$$

One limitation of analyzing Twitter data is that I have gathered the number of Tweets each day as they appeared in 2019. It is possible that some of the original tweets that were sent out around the days of protest are no longer on the platform. This could happen if the user that tweeted initially has either removed their account or made their account private. It is also possible that Twitter removed a tweet (usually for violating the platform's guidelines) or altogether banned an account, implicitly removing all the tweets they have ever sent. While there is no way to precisely measure the effect of the removed tweets, it is unlikely they would account for a large portion of the initial messages. Furthermore, unless we suspect a certain active period for tweets to have been removed, a uniform, random removal of tweets should not affect the correlations later presented, since it is the relative change in numbers, not the absolute, that has an effect on the regression.

The other dataset that I will be using jointly with the one above, for producing results through data analysis, is the number of protesters present in the physical space each day a protest was reported. Since the data here is gathered from nonacademic, media sources, the reported numbers are not to be considered highly accurately, since different news outlets with different political affinities have in some instances reported substantially different numbers of protesters (i.e., opposition media tends to overestimate the number of protesters, while media sided more closely with the ruling party PSD, tends to underestimate the number of protesters). In those cases, I have used the average of the reported numbers to add the data point.

Returning to online data, Google Trends is a publicly available platform meant for exploring "how Google data can be used to tell stories" ("Google Trends" n.d.). The tool shows users how frequently Google's search engine is used for a given search term, relative to the total search volume, over the given time frame. Unlike Google Keyword Planner, the paid counterpart of the tool, Google Trends does not show absolute search volumes, but instead relative values that range from 0 (no searches) to 100 (most searches), on the specified period of time. While the platform does offer historical data up to 2004, it is limited to daily data to only up to 31 day periods. For example, if selecting a one-calendar-month period, where the *#rezist* keyword got 500 searches on January 1, more than in any other day of the month, and 250 searches on January 2, Google Trends would rank January 1 at 100 and the next day at 50. If a similar search quarry was performed for March, where March 1, had 50 searches for *#rezist*

(more than in any other day of March) and March 2 has 25 searches, these two days would also be ranked at 100 and 50 (just like the previous month) even though the absolute search volume decreased 10 fold. This creates a relativity problem with downloading monthly data one-by-one and compiling them together afterwards. While overlapping parts of the 31 day periods and adjusting for the relativity factor could potentially solve the problem, this would not only slow down and make the process inefficient, but would also add extra layers of data processing that could result in errors. Therefore, in this case, I have decided to focus on the most critical month of the protests, as it will be revealed in the results section, February 2017. In addition, I have also downloaded the data for the entire period (January 1, 2017, to August 15, 2019), but in this case the relative search volume is aggregated per 7 day periods, offering data points for every week, but not for each day.

Equipped with Twitter data, number of protesters data, as well as the Google Trends data, I will be looking for correlations in between the different datasets that along with information revealed through the other research methods could provide insightful results.

Firstly, I performed a regression analysis for the data corresponding to each day of protest (39 distinct days of reported protest in the entire time period) through an external online calculator (see Figure 6). Not knowing if the relationship would be linear, I also ran the data (at planetcalc.com) through a cubic, quadratic, power, ab-exponential, logarithmic, hyperbolic, and exponential regression in order to see if any of them stand apart as a much better fit than any other. However, the results only had the cubic and quadratic, to a lesser extent, regression offer a better fit than the linear regression, but only by a coefficient of 0.0403. Therefore, not having any reason from the literature or discourse analysis to believe that correlations would be non-linear, it seems sufficient to rely on the Excel Pearson function to only be using linear correlations for analysis moving forward, referred to from now on simply as "correlation" (Benesty et al. 2009). For determining the significance of the correlation, the P-value is used according to the formula $t = \frac{r \times \sqrt{n-2}}{\sqrt{1-c^2}}$ and $p = TDIST(t, n-2, 2)$ where p is the P value, r is the correlation coefficient, n is the sample size (n-2=degrees of freedom for a sample with 2 variables), t is the T statistic, and TDIST is a Microsoft Office Excel function ("TDIST Function" n.d.), for a 2 tail statistic, allowing for any direction in the correlation, positive or negative.
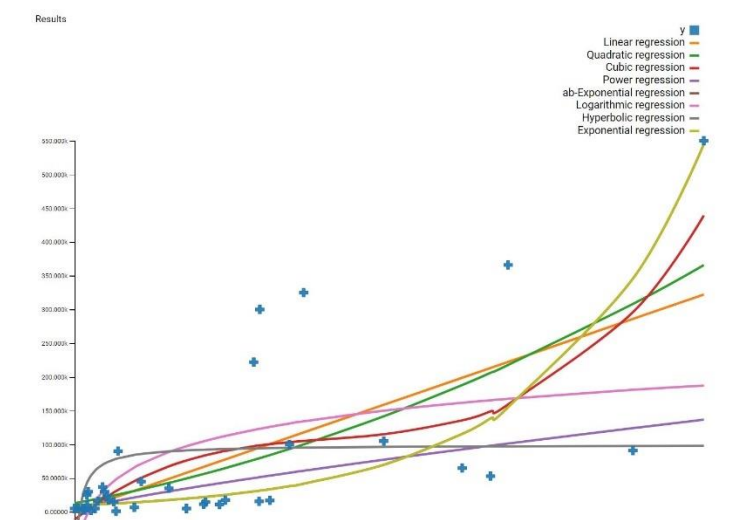

Figure 6. Multi-regression analysis of protesters vs. tweets for protest days

Lastly, for Twitter data, to complement the premium functions I have not received access to through Pulsar, I have used, in lieu, socioviz.net and hashtagify.me. SocioViz offers the user and hashtag network maps that I am interested in, but unfortunately is limited to the last 7 days of historical data, even in its paid premium version. Hashtagify is of almost no use in the free version, but fortunately, they do offer a free trial of their premium service that is also confined to a rather short past 9 days. Limited as they are, I will be using and presenting the results from these two platforms in conjunctions with the more reliable, extended, data described above. Given the limited timeframe available to work within the case of these two platforms, I have looked at the period of time overlapping August 10, when the largest, by number, protest of the 2019 summer happened. More precisely, the periods are August 9 to 15, 2019, for SocioViz, and August 9 to 18, 2019, for Hashtagify.

A last-minute addition to the quantitative analysis is the "Facebook Insight Data" from the Corruption Kills page. After the interview, Florin Bădiță, as a founder and administrator of the page, offered me analyst access to the extremely comprehensive data Facebook stores. The Excel spreadsheet generated for analyzing up to 180 consecutive days contains 69 sheets, each with numerous variables, breaking down page metrics by time periods, language, location, user gender and age, and many others that are beyond the scope of the analysis. However, the key metrics of interest to me are the number, per day, of *new page likes*, *engagement*, *reach*, and *impressions*, that can be compared to the numbers relevant to street demonstrations. The only downside to the way data is handled by Facebook is that the archive is limited to the last two years from the date of the request. Therefore, the dataset I am using spans from August 25, 2017, to August 14, 2019, and was compiled from 5 separate queries, due to the 180 days data request limit.

4.2.2. FIXED FORM QUESTIONNAIRE

As part of the quantitative methods of research, I have written a questionnaire form designed to gather data useful in shedding some light onto my research questions, particularly regarding people's perceptions on the relationship of virtual and physical spaces in the case of the #rezist protests. In this section, I will be discussing two main aspects of the questionnaire: the content and the distribution (including its subsequent implications in data sampling and bias).

The questionnaire, which can be found in full (and filled with my pre-thesis research opinions) in the Appendix section 7.5.1. of this paper, is divided into nine sections. The first and the last section, the "Introduction" and "Thank You," do not contain questions. In the introduction, respondents are told what is expected of them and receive a brief explanation about the purpose of the questionnaire specifically, and the purpose of my thesis more generally. Similarly, the last section concludes by thanking respondents for their time and effort, and gives them an opportunity to leave their name and email, if they so wish, in case they would be interested in a possible follow up. Otherwise, the questionnaire remains completely anonymous. This is also the only place where respondents can submit their own written answer, all the others being multiple choice only. In the last section, there is also a humorous photograph of a person with a placard reading "A lot of things are actually going pretty well," to lighten the

mood at the end of the otherwise austere questionnaire, that could have potentially been an intense exercise for those strongly emotionally involved in a cause. However, in retrospect, I would not have included the photo, as having it was not necessary to my research, but some respondents saw it as an affront. A 4chan anonymous user left the comment "if only you knew how bad things truly are" immediately under the photograph in the space meant for leaving their contact, while Gerard Filip, a Facebook user, explained that he sees the photo as a statement that should have no place in a questionnaire. With this issue in mind, I have decided to keep the questionnaire's results and not redo the exercise with the picture removed, as the problematic photo was displayed at the very end, in a different section, and could not have influenced any of the user's responses submitted beforehand.

The other seven sections of the questionnaire all collect data specific to each respondent. Section number two gathers at first relevant innate data about individuals (such as sex) and continues with other questions about their current status and habits (income group, time spent at work, or on different internet platforms). Section number three "Values and Interest" has a self-explanatory title and asks for the respondents' self-assessed interest in politics and social issues, as well as their estimate of the degree to which their views were influenced by different entities, among others. The last question of the section asks for the respondent knowledge of the #rezist movement. As shown in Figure 7, section four gets skipped if the respondent answers as having no knowledge of the movement. Otherwise, they are asked about their perception regarding the movement when it comes to the most important entities and the validity of a number of statements that they can rate on a five-point scale (from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree). Section five has only one question and is again meant to split the respondents onto three questionnaire paths depending on their experience. For people that have never involved themselves with either online or offline social or political issues, section six and seven are skipped, and they are redirected to section eight where they are questioned about what would incentivize them to participate in such action. For the respondents that have had some previous engagement related to social or political issues, but not with the #rezist movement, only section six is skipped, being redirected to section seven where they are asked more specifically about their social engagement. For those that did engage with #rezist, no section is skipped, and section six askes them about the specifics of their engagement with #rezist.

With the questionnaire having been developed, one of the first decisions I had to make was if I would print it and have respondents fill a physical form, or if I should create a digital version that I could share online. Besides concerns for paper use that would alienate environmental activists, I have opted for a digital form for a number of reasons. However, I am also compelled to bring to attention what some of the downsides of this choice might be.

First of all, an online questionnaire can be filled at a respondent's discretion and does not require the effort of either filling it immediately when prompted (which could be a less than convenient time), or finding a way of submitting it to me later. If a respondent receives the link to the form, they can fill it whenever it is most convenient for them. Convenience being the key word in being able to have a larger percentage of people be willing to fill the questionnaire diligently, in the absence of any material incentive. Ideally, a reward would have been offered for the completion of the questionnaire (e.g. a chance to win a gift card through a raffle, or a

smaller, but guaranteed payment, as in the case of the data pertaining to the Cambridge Analytica, as discussed above). Secondly, with an online questionnaire, I am hoping for a certain degree of a "cascade effect," having at least some respondents pass forward the link to others. Moreover, Google Forms (the free platform that hosted and enabled the filling of the questionnaire) provides the option for navigating different sections of the form based on previous answers, ideal for the section skipping described above. Finally, data gathered already online requires less processing time, and with Google Forms' embedded tools for visualizing data, such as bar graphs and pie charts for various questions, the initial phase of data interpretation is also facilitated.
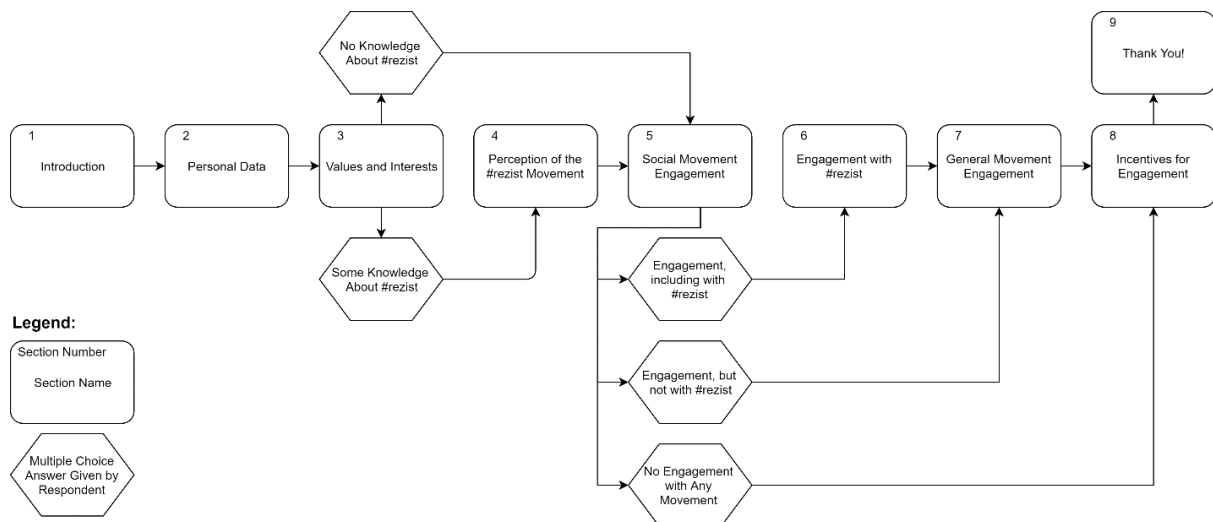

Figure 7. Flowchart of questionnaire answer path

One of the downsides of choosing an online form is the sampling bias that would only allow people who have a computer or mobile device available and know how to properly use it to fill the questionnaire. In this respect, there is a small, but still real, group of people who would not be part of my sample unless helped to fill the questionnaire by someone else. However, I realized that my sample of respondents would not be large enough to be truly random in either the case of an online or physical form. Therefore, when looking at interpreting the results, as I will detail in the later sections, I will be using the findings not as representative for an entire population, but as insights into the practices, characteristics, and opinions of a limited number of subsets. Furthermore, given my specific interest in the relation and interaction of physical and virtual spaces, and the several questions targeted at users of virtual spaces, it is more pertinent to gather answers from internet users.

In distributing the questionnaire, I have employed three approaches. The first was sending it to Facebook Friends, a group composed of some strong, but mostly week ties, including actual friends, family, and acquaintances. This approach proved most successful, with respondents not only being willing to find the time to take the questionnaire but also to forward it to others. Out of my list of friends, I have selected those whom I knew were Romanian, in Romania, or had a connection to the country (e.g. through a significant other). While my assessment of their interest in politics and social issues did not influence my selection, it is my impression that, perhaps unsurprisingly, those that did hold an interest were more likely to respond to my message and fill the questionnaire.

Moving beyond the Facebook friends, I have also made use, admittedly with more limited success, of Facebook groups. I had already requested to join the main #rezist Facebook groups, following their posts as part of the qualitative methods of observation, however, at this point I decided to post to the groups, leaving a message along with the link to the form, asking members to help me by filling the questionnaire. However, the groups are mostly focused on news reporting and some, limited, meme picture posting, and my entry quickly got "buried" under the more arguably interesting posts, accompanied by eye-catching photos, that generated engagement through comments and likes. The pages I have posted to were "#Rezist" (11.593 members), "#REZIST" (4.687 members) and "#REZIST in Diaspora" (18.364 members)[1]. Another Facebook group I have posted to was "Political Realm" (5160 members)[2], an international, and politically diverse group or politics and history enthusiasts. I have also reached out to REZIST (~31.000 likes, the semi-official *#rezist* Facebook page started and managed by DeClic) to ask them to share my questionnaire with their audience, but I have not received a response back.

Finally, I have also branched out of Facebook and made a Reddit and a 4chan post. The Reddit post was not approved by the r/politics moderators without providing further explanation. The 4chan post gained some traction and had a few users fill the questionnaire and leave messages of encouragement such as "I filled in your survey. Good luck with your studies anon". Since trolling is common on both Reddit and 4chan, I had made a duplicated of my original questionnaire form and gathered these answers separately, as a failsafe, so I could be able to screen and avoid questionnaire answers that were not sent in good faith, but instead intended to skew my results. After reviewing the 12 answers from the 4chan submitted form, I have decided it would be best to leave them out of the study as I have received responses that did not seem genuine (e.g. always choosing the first option of every question).

5. The Anatomy of Protest: Results and Discussion
5.1. #Rezist: Overview of the Context and Events

The mostly empirical information provided in this section is based on the existing literature, the totality of the discourse analysis, including secondary (journalistic) sources, the qualitative interviews, informal discussions, personal knowledge, and observation, but also relevant information produced through the quantitative part of my analysis. While section 2.4 (Context and Case Study) serves as a basis for understanding the chapters to follow, it is only a prelude to the depth of the events that will be discussed here, which offer the timeline, full context, and insight into the struggles of the 2017-2019 Romanian protests, as they happened both online and offline.

Romania is a unitary semi-presidential republic, with an elected president (every 5 years) and an elected bicameral parliament (every 4 years). According to the constitution, the prime minister is appointed by the president after consulting with the majority leaders of the

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[1] Group member numbers as of July 2019

[2] The number of group members are accurate as of 1 August 2019

parliament. After the appointment, the prime minister must pass a vote of confidence held in a joint session by the two chambers of the parliament. In 2016, Romania held Parliamentary elections on December 11, and PSD (with a European affiliation to the Party of European Socialists) won a relative majority in both Senate (45,67%) and Deputy Chamber (45,47%). On January 4, 2017, Grindeanu of PSD became Prime Minister, and his cabinet was officially sworn in.

On January 5 the Parliament passed a law that would enable the government to pass decrees as well, when Parliament was not in session. In parallel, a law concerning amnesty, pardons, and the amendment of the Penal Code in regards to the abuse of power, was also being developed by PSD, but drew harsh criticism from the opposition and the President, Klaus Iohannis. The opponents claimed that the decree was designed to help decriminalize corruption acts, helping numerous current and former politicians escape ongoing criminal investigations or prison sentences for corruption charges with damages of less than 200.000 RON (approximately 44.000 EUR at that time)(Petre 2017). PSD defended the law by claiming it was only meant to correct injustices done by the judicial system and ease the strain on an overcrowded penitentiary network. Protests spread throughout the country and President Iohannis joined in. On January 31, in the evening, the government convened under the pretense of disusing economic bills but instead passed the amnesty and pardon decree. A spontaneous protest erupted, and 15.000 people gathered in front of the government building in Victory Square. The next few days saw growing protests and had the newly passed decree sent to the Constitutional Court for review, where it was declared constitutional.

On February 1, in the morning, DeClic launched a webpage titled "Civic Disobedience Kit" providing printable materials and ideas of how protesters should rally behind the hashtag *#rezist.* The webpage contains useful information about protesting and teaches people what they should and should not do in order to have a successful movement. The page also encourages people to share its contents online via Facebook or Twitter. Prior to the page lunch, there is only one Twitter mention of *#rezist* (on January 31, 2017) used in reference to the Romanian protests, but the post received to this day no likes or retweets.[3] Starting from that day, people bring *#rezist* banners in the physical space even before the hashtag went viral, and the struggle against the government becomes known as the *#rezist movement* in the press.

On February 5, the day after the largest protest yet, with more than 300.000 people, the government conceded and voided the amnesty and pardon law. On the same day, more than half a million people protested in front of the government building, a number not seen since the Romanian Revolution against communism in 1989, making it the largest protest in Romanian history. The period of time following saw protests quiet down, but not completely disappear, their demands shifting from annulment of the pardon law to early elections and government resignations. Moreover, the protesters did not receive assurances that the annulment of the law in question was a final matter, but instead PSD leadership later attempted to change part of the initial text of the law, diluting and breaking it down, in order to pass it through Parliament as a sum of laws.

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[3] Before January 31, 2017 most #rezist twitter uses are simply a misspelling of the English language #resist referencing the resistance against US President Donald Trump.

Through the protests, national media coverage seemed biased, with partisan network reporting substantially distinct numbers of protesters (with differences as high as 100.000, or 20% of the total number of participants). Only a few Romanian media channels seem to side with *rezist*, while most are viewed as potentially corrupt by the majority of *rezist* protesters, who instead seek the attention of international news channels, with consistent use of the English language in both online and offline activism. On the other hand, some of those siding with PSD, view the Romanian media channels as the ones that have a better grasp and understanding of the situation, with foreign news aiding foreign interests, detrimental to Romania, and seeking to destabilize the country.

Figure 8. Romanians using English in relation to the protests, both online (Tweet) and offline (placard).

In the flowing months, due to internal power struggles, PSD replaced the Prime Minister two times, but while protester momentum seemed to be decreasing. Despite the overwhelming public display of opposition towards PSD, the party had its supporters protests as well, against the *rezist* movement. The people in favor of PSD's decisions organize protests in front of the Cotroceni Palace, the seat of the Presidency, gathering their most substantial numbers, over 100.000 people, on June 9, 2018. The counter-protesters are organized by the PSD party apparatus, but at times also use similar digital strategies as *rezist*, creating Facebook events through groups, or tweeting.

August 10, 2018, saw the largest protest since February 5, 2017, with approximately 100.000 people being present in Victory Square, a large part of them representing the Romanian diaspora. However, unlike before, protests clashed with the authorities and turned violent. The Gendarmerie was ordered to use gas grenades, pepper spray, water cannons, and tear gas against the protesters. There were several reports of unnecessary use of force. Among them, ORF, the Austrian public channel, stated that one of their cameramen was attacked by gendarmes, and the Israeli embassy released a statement confirming that 3 of their nationals were injured by the authorities, despite being tourists. President Iohannis expressed concern with the actions of the government, but Dragnea, the de facto leader of PSD and thus of the parliament and government, affirmed that the rule of law must be kept. In October 2018 the #rezist protesters submitted to CEDO (European Court of Human Rights) a newly passed law stating that protests must be announced in advance, after the Romanian courts find the law just (Blanuta 2018). One month later a scandal breaks out claiming that George Soros, the Hungarian-American billionaire, allegedly financed the #rezist movement with 14 million US dollars' worth of cryptocurrency, paid by a Polish foundation, in order to destabilize Romania(Ionescu-Heroiu 2018). On February 24, 2019, another 25.000 people protest erupted when a law similar to the initial pardon and amnesty one was passed. A year after the violent protests, on August 10, 2019, a commemorative protest gathered 24.000 people.

5.2. Actor Mapping and Timeline

      To help visualize the intricate relationships between the actors described above, I am providing the timeline of the events in Figure 9, and the actor map in Figure 10. Both figures should be used as a reference for identifying the rapports at play during the *#rezist* protests and observe the events in chronological order, at a glance.
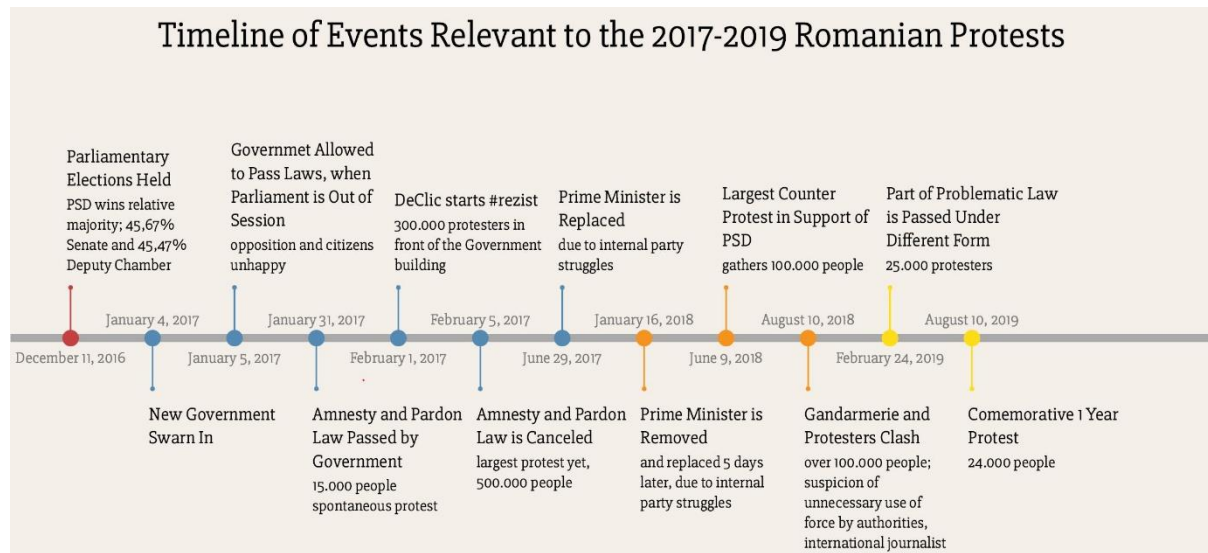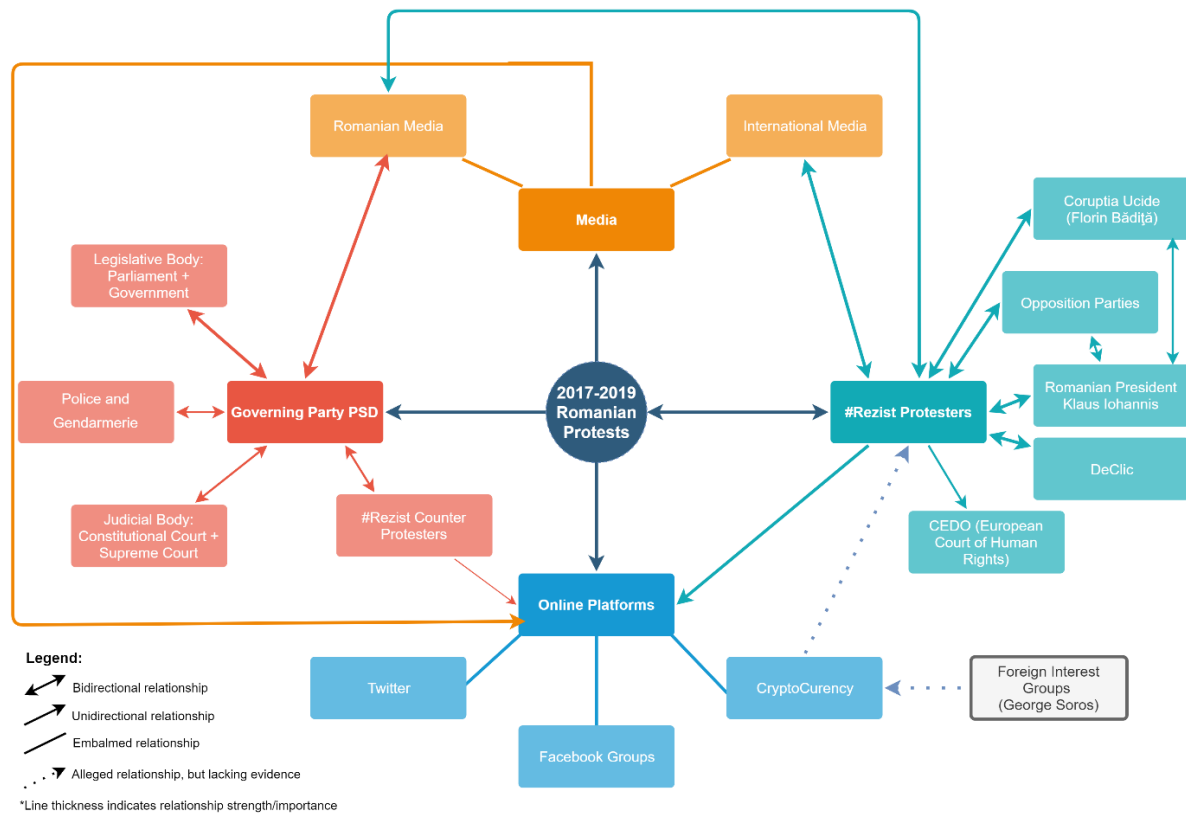

Figure 9.

Figure 10. Actor Map relevant to the 2017-2019 Romanian protests

In the Actor Map, relationships are directional and represented through a pointing arrow. For example, the *#rezist* protesters reaching out to CEDO forms a one-way relationship, but President Iohannis has a bidirectional relationship with the protests since he had a line of dialogue with the activists. The strength of the relationship is also approximated through the thickness of the line. In the case of the alleged, but not proven, relationship of Soros funding *#rezist* through cryptocurrency transfers, a dotted line is used. Finally, distinct components of a broader umbrella category are connected through a line (with no arrow) as in the case of Twitter being an online platform. At the center, resides the central issue of the Romanian 2017-2019 protests, with ramifications towards all actors.

5.3. THE PHYSICAL SPACES

According to the literature, a key challenge to digital activism is maintaining the momentum and a high level of engagement over long periods of time (Haperen, Nicholls, and Uitermark 2018; Bennett and Segerberg 2012). In Figure 11 below, the chronology of the size of the *#rezist* protests is shown. In order to describe the evolution of the movement, the number of activists that took part in the street protests is graphed in blue, while the (sometimes) competing counter-protests' size is represented by orange bars. It is important to note that the scale is logarithmic and starts at 100, since the absolute differences of the numbers of protesters are less relevant for this paper than the relative ones, as they change through time. Furthermore, the time scale only marks the dates that had protests occur, for the same purpose as before. Finally, the reported numbers are not to be considered very accurately, since different news sources with different political affinities have in some instances reported substantially different numbers of protesters. In those cases, I have used the average of the reported numbers for the plotted bar graph.
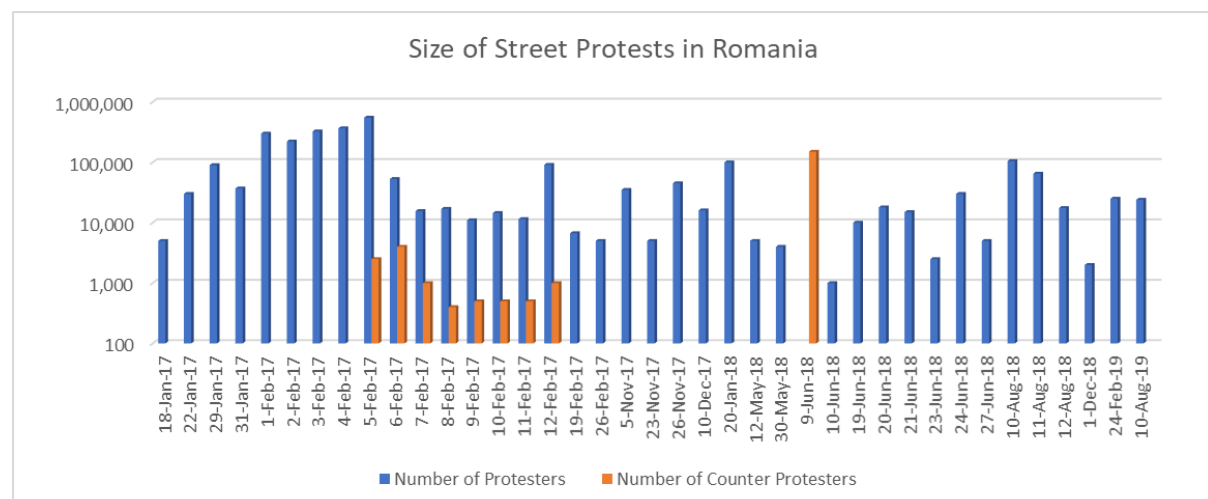

Figure 11. Size of street protests in Romania, 2017-2019. The aggregate data of the number of participants in the most noteworthy protests, as reported by Romanian and international news outlets (see nonacademic references for data sources).

From Figure 11 above, we can divide the protests into 3 periods: "out-break," "cool-down," and "resurgence." The first period starts on the 18th of January 2017 and culminates less than 3 weeks later, but having multiplied the people engaged by a factor of almost 100. The cool-down period takes over one year, from February 26, 2017 to June 9, 2018. During this time, the activist movement has sporadic street protests, usually triggered by political

decisions made by the party they oppose. However, in this period, there is a trend of diminishing number of protesters. Finally, after a massive pro-government (anti *#rezist*) protest is organized by the supporters of PSD (the governing party) on June 9, 2018, the *#rezist* activists are re-engaged by the event. Following, they organize several protests that culminate one month later into a street demonstration of almost the same scale as their opponents'. Further insight will be presented in Section 5.5 below, particularly by analyzing Figure 19 and Figure 18.

5.4. THE VIRTUAL SPACES

Virtual spaces, through their very nature, provide extensive and detailed amounts of data that, if publicly available, can be used not only for interpreting digitally related phenomena but also to gain insight into real-world situations. Therefore, without further due, let us look at what the data shows, and interpret it. One of the first metrics of *#rezist* to look at, for virtual spaces, is the number of tweets including the hashtag compared with the popularity of the same hashtag in Google Trends. A positive correlation is to be expected, meaning that when people tweet more about *#rezist*, there is also an increase in Google searches for *#rezist*. This does not comment on the causality or the direction of the relationship between the two variables, but it is a necessary first step in confirming the intuition described above.

As shown below, virtual spaces, including the Google search engine and the Twitter platform, are used similarly and congruently by people when it comes to the *#rezist* movement. The fabric of virtual space is interwoven, and users and information are moving with a certain degree of freedom in between different virtual places. Due to the limitations explained above in section 3.3, Information Networks and Raw Data Analysis, I am going to analyze two periods. First, the month I will consider February 2017, looking at each day as a distinct data point (Figure 12), since it marked the start of the use of the *#rezist* hashtag in the protests, and it was the most intense period in terms of protest frequency and number of participants. The second period covers the entirety of the protests, from January 1, 2017, to August 15, 2019, but with data points only represented by 7 days (1 week) sub-periods. (Figure 13).
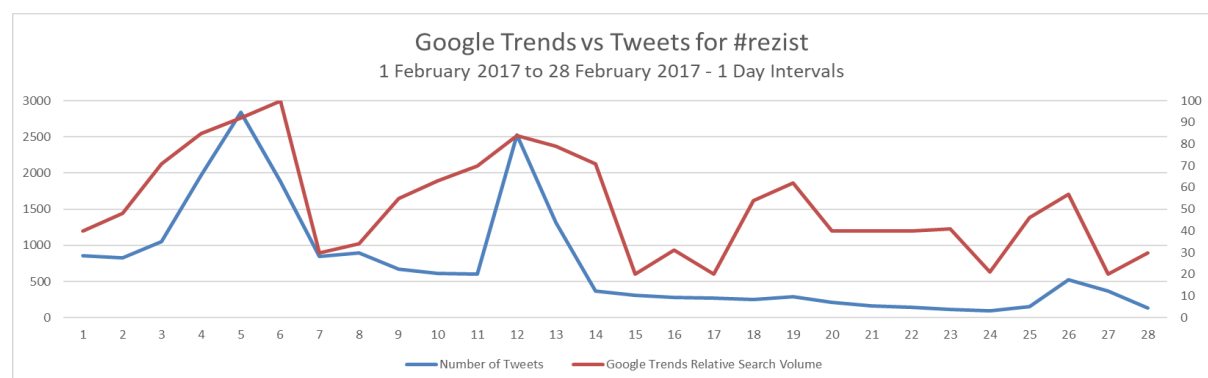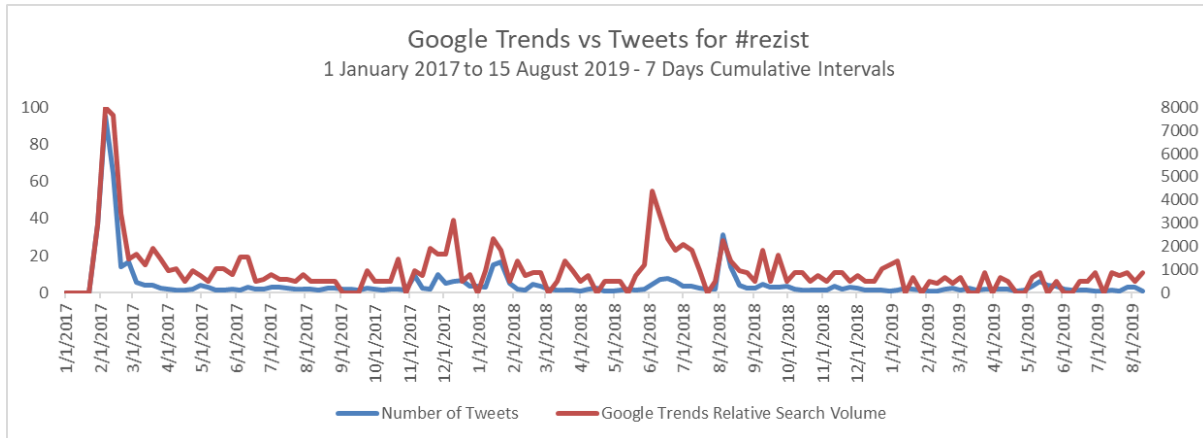

Figure 12.

Figure 13.

Figure 12 shows the number of tweets spiking and decreasing abruptly, while the Google Trends line is softer, with less steep movements. The graph for the entire period (Figure 13), similarly, has the two lines moving simultaneously, with one significant exception on the 7 day period following June 3, 2018 (with June 9 witnessing the largest pro-PSD, anti *#rezist* protest). The correlation in Figure 12 in between the *number of tweets* and the *Google Trends relative search volume* is 0.748. With a P-value of ≈0.000002 (p<0.05), the relationship is significant. Similarly, for the entire period, the correlation in between *the sum of the total number of #rezist tweets for each week* and the *Google Trends relative search volume* for the same week is ≈0.815 (with $p≈7.78x10^{-34}$), confirming a stronger, valid, correlation in the same direction as before. Moreover, when considering the week of the sizeable pro-PSD protest an outlier and removing it from the data, which accounted for the Google Trends volume spike and was not reciprocated by a spike in tweets, the correlation becomes even stronger, with a coefficient of ≈0.856 ($p≈1.71x10^{-40}$).

However, none of these numbers, by themselves, point to causality. So, in an attempt to see if one of the variables, in effect, follows the other with a certain delay, I have studied the same data variables, but offset them in the regression by one day, or one week respectively. The correlation between the *number of tweets* in one day, and the next day *Google Trends relative search volume* is ≈0.606 ($p≈4.66x10^{-6}$). For the reverse, the *Google Trends relative search volume* in one day and the *number of tweets* in the next day is slightly, but not significantly, lower at a correlation of ≈0.58 (p≈0.001). Therefore, it can be inferred that the volume of tweets and searched for #rezist is relatively proportionate within any given day. Similarly, for the entire time frame, with one-week intervals, the correlation of *tweets* and *Google Trends relative search volume* offset by one-week computes worst results with ≈0.677 and ≈0.496 respectively ($p≈7.08x10^{-10}$ and $p≈9.98x10^{-20}$). Meaning that the *number of tweets* in one week is a better predictor for the *Google search volume* next week, than *Google search volume* in one week is a predictor of the *number of tweets* the next week (0.677>0.496). Perhaps Twitter users are a bit quicker to post about #rezist than the general public is to search for the hashtag on Google. However, the two offset correlations being lower than the initial aligned one seems to come against the possible argument that twitter users initiate and coordinate the social movements, when in fact they are not truly ahead of the general public that is searching for the same term.

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Still relating to virtual space data only, Hashtagify offers a ranking of the most influential accounts that have mentioned a hashtag within the studied period (see Figure 15). Perhaps surprisingly, @TaraSkurtu, an American poet living in Romania, is at the top of the list, with a record that does not seem hard to pass: 3 tweets with the hashtag *#rezist* out of a total of 383, and a total of only 3 retweets for those 3 hashtag *#rezist* tweets. The number seems rather low for a profile with more than 18.000 followers. Checking on the accounts ranked lower than @TaraSkurtu, the numbers are similar, sometimes slightly higher, but ranked below still due to the user profiles having an overall lower engagement and user follower count. While I was not able to perform a similar analysis for the first week of February 2017, which would have been of more interest, I have used Pulsar Trends to identify some of the top tweets of the period. @TaraSkurtu was again among the top tweets with the one shown in Figure 14, this time amassing 132 retweets and 312 likes.
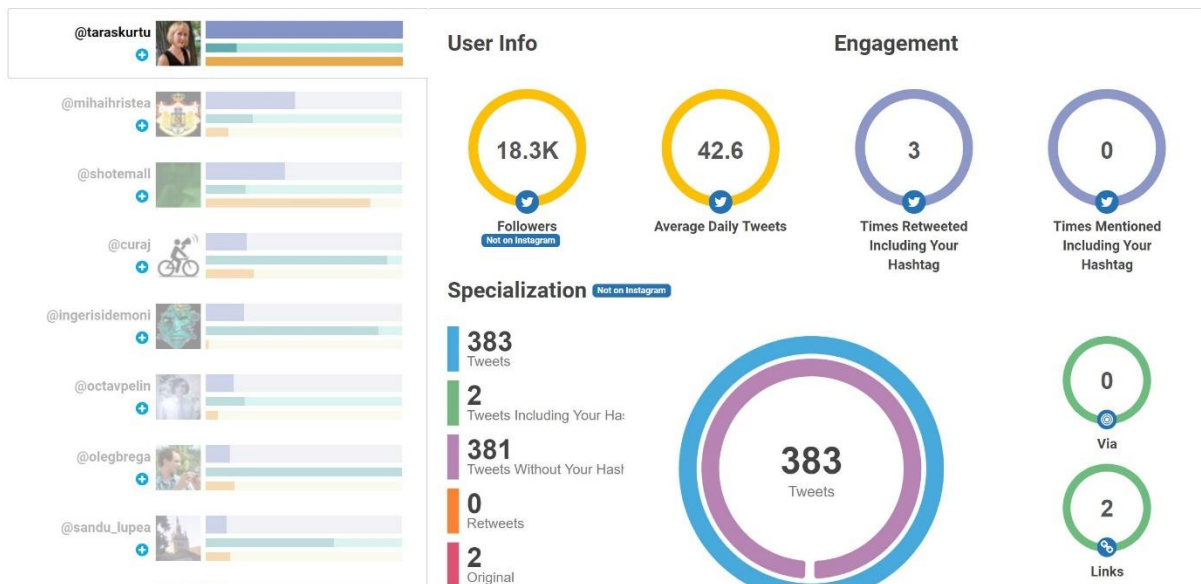

Figure 14. @TaraSkurtu's most engaged Tweet pertaining to #rezist

Figure 15. Most influential Twitter accounts for #rezist, August 9 to 15, 2019

The information from SocioViz (available in the Appendix sections 7.6 and 7.7) confirms the narrative above, with @TaraSkurtu as a central focus of the mentions map network, meaning that other accounts have mentioned @TaraSkurtu and used the *#rezist* hashtag in a tweet. This indicates that other Twitter users involved with *#rezist* recognize @TaraSkurtu's account as being influential and important to the movement. While the relationships shown are built only based on data from the August 9 to 15, 2019, we can extrapolate that @TaraSkurtu was probably involved with *#rezist* network before, as the Tweet from Figure 14 confirms. However, looking at the larger picture, the network has islands of connectedness, and it is not as a whole interconnected. In fact, when looking at tweets individually, they have little to no engagement, far from producing a cascade effect of virality. The data of August 2019 pointing towards a loss of momentum by the movement, was also echoed throughout the interviews.

5.5. Chanting + Retweeting: Connecting the Digital with the Tangible

Equipped with the metrics for both virtual and physical activism, it is now time to compare their relationship. Table 1 below displays the relevant statistical numbers for the month of February 2017 and connects the *number of tweets* with the *number of protesters* each day.

Table 1.

Number of Total Tweets vs. Number of Protesters 1-28 February 2017	Correlation	T Statistic	P-Value
The Same Day	0.695234	4.931972	0.000040
The Day Before	0.697062	4.860894	0.000053
The Day After	0.344387	1.834138	0.078564

There is a positive, significant relationship for both "the same day" and "the day before", meaning that in a day with large number of protesters, we can expect large number of tweets, and in a day with low number of protesters we can expect low number of tweets - which seems intuitive (whichever the causality). However, there is an almost equal, but slightly larger, significant correlation for "the day before," meaning that depending on the numbers of tweets one day, we can infer the relative number of protesters the day before. The reverse is that the number of protesters one day can predict the tweets the next day. So, after a large day of protest, we can expect people to tweet the day of the protest and the next day. However, "the day after" has a low insignificant correlation ($p>0.05$) that does not invalidate the null hypothesis (there is no correlation in between the number of tweets sent one day, and the size of the protest the next day). Therefore, the number of tweets can be viewed as reactive to a protest, not a signal of it. People usually do not tweet about the protest that will happen, but about the protest that is happening ("same day") or has happened ("day before"). The finding is conclusive with the empirical data, which showed Twitter users posting pictures of the physical protest and commentary on the events that happened in the square, more often than they would have posted about the organization of a protest.

Similarly, Table 2 sums up the relevant statistical values for the relationship between each day of February 2017, in terms of Google search volume for *#rezist* and number of protesters. A similar relationship is developed here: Google search volumes are positively correlated with protester numbers on the day of the protest, and the day after the protest. This makes sense because people search for news usually after they happen, not before. Also, predictably and conclusive with the empirical findings, news (including the media outlet websites that would show up through a Google search) report more often on what has happened, not on what will happen.

Table 2.

Google Trends #rezist Search Volume vs. Number of Protesters 1-28 February 2017	Correlation	T Statistic	P-Value
The Same Day	0.467392	2.695819	0.012148
The Day Before	0.634421	4.103681	0.000379
The Day After	0.293845	1.537082	0.136835

Figure 16 (corresponding to Table 1) and Figure 17 (corresponding to Table 2) below reiterate the same narrative. After the largest protest on February 5, the physical demonstrations extinguish quicker than the Twitter posting or Google searches that continue at comparable levels even when the number of protesters is significantly lower.
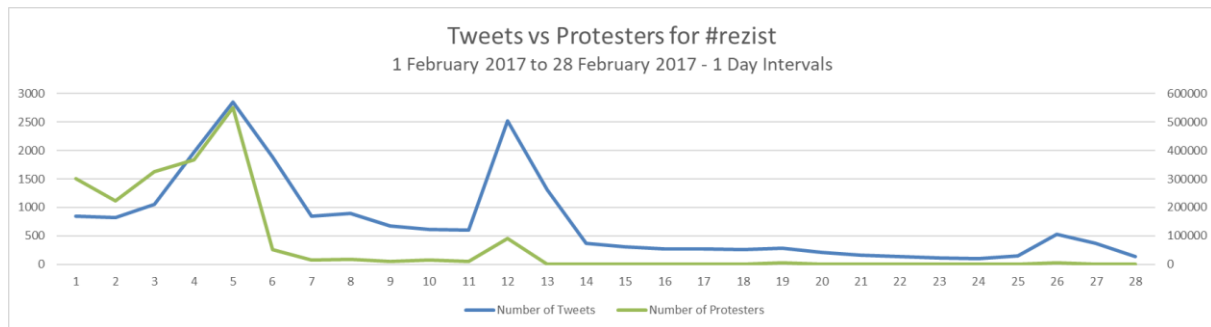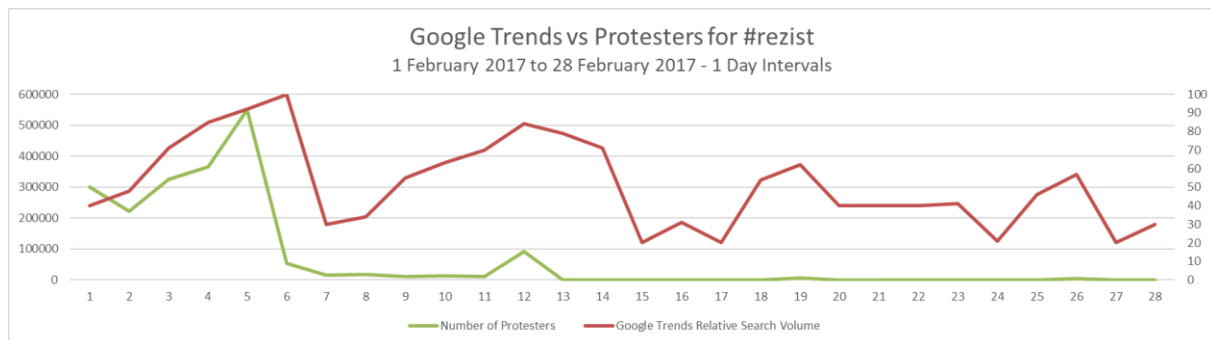

Figure 16.

Figure 17.

Moving forward, it must be considered that perhaps the month of February 2017 is not a good representation of the entire protesting period, due to both its positioning at the very beginning of the movement, and its unmatched intensity (both in terms of numbers of protesters, and number of protests within the given period)

Figure 19 and Figure 18 below graph the total number of tweets (including all relevant hashtags) against the days of protest. While the first the graph displays exclusively the days that gathered the protesters in the public spaces, the second graph allows for a 2 day period before and after the protest to offer the possibility to observe what is the movement of the number of tweets before and after. The scales in both cases are logarithmic for better visualization of the movements. Moreover, since I am interested in the relative numbers of tweets and protesters, the two values are mapped against their own vertical axis. From the figures, it can be seen that days of protest align with a spike in tweets, followed by another day of numerous tweets, but not preceded by one – same as in the restrictive case of February 2017 presented above.
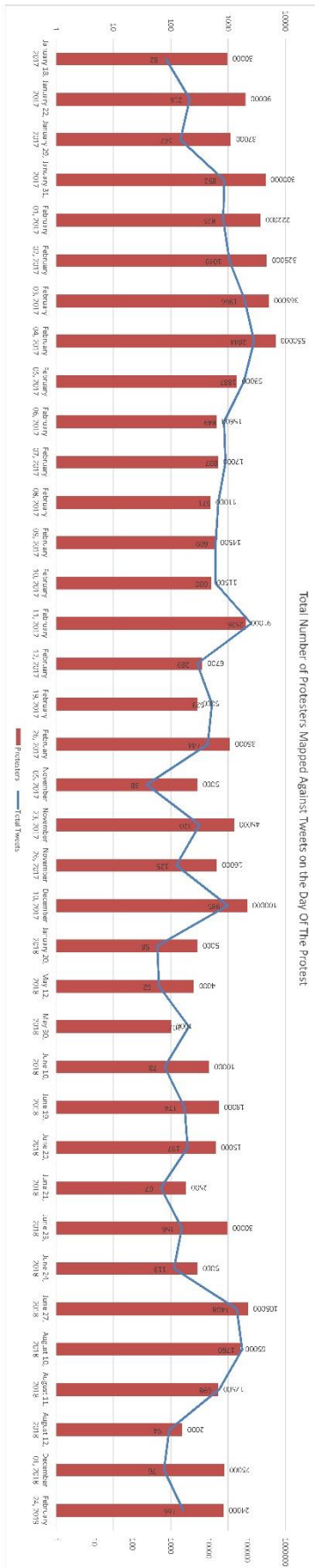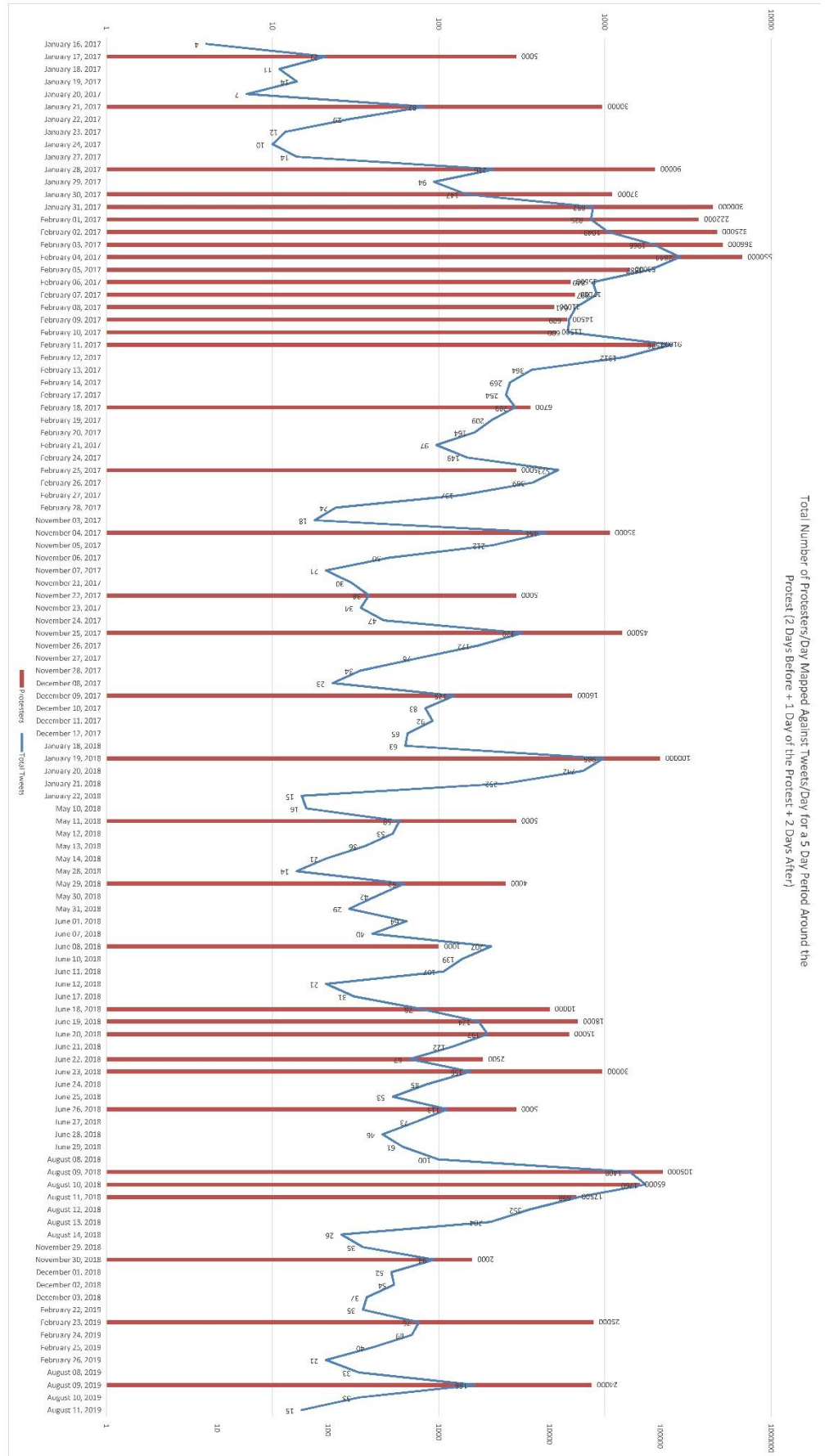
Figure 18.

Figure 19.

The metrics relevant are presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3.

Number of Total Tweets vs. Number of Protesters - 1 January 2017 to 15 August 2019 (Relative to Day of Protest)	Correlation	T Statistic	P-Value
Same Day	0.677256	5.523004	0.000003
Day Before	0.367689	2.37232	0.023142
1 Day After	0.670757	5.42628	0.000004
2 Days After	0.558045	4.03499	0.000272

As before, it is worth investigating the correlation for *the day before the protest*, *the day after*, and (why not) *the second day after*, relative to the *total number of tweets*. The number of protesters is just as tightly correlated to the number of tweets on the day of the protest, as it is the day after the protest. Moving to two days after the protest, the correlation decreases, but it is still higher than the correlation between *the number of protesters* and *the number of tweets* before the protest.

Finally, when breaking apart the compiled total number of tweets, Table 4 below shows that *#rezist* is by far the most used hashtag, with #m**iePSD also used often. The group of all other hashtags equals to approximately 10% of the tweets including *#rezist*, in the entire two-and-a-half-year period. While the use of *#rezist* has a significant positive correlation with the size of the protests, *#m**ePSD* is virtually unrelated. The *group of hashtags* is strongly correlated with the size of the protests, perhaps because it includes specific hashtags such as *#protestRomania* that would serve their purpose predominately on the days of physical protests.

Table 4.

Number of Tweets vs. Number of Protesters - 1 January 2017 to 15 August 2019 (Days of Protest Only)	Nr. Of Tweets	Correlation	T Statistic	P-Value
#rezist	19746	0.586861	4.348798	0.000107
#m**ePSD	4388	-0.000202	-0.001213	0.999038
Group Hashtags	2038	0.859724	10.099411	0.000000
Any Hashtag	24079 (8% Overlap)	0.677256	5.523004	0.000003

The data from Facebook tells a very similar, albeit less compelling, story. Still, diligence dictates I present and interpret the data I've compiled, even if the results are not as captivating as before. Table 5 below presents the relevant correlations in between Facebook insight data and the number of street protesters, putting them in perspective to Twitter data. Since the time period is different (shorter) than analyzed before, the correlation between the number of Tweets and Protesters is also presented. As before, when every day of the period is analyzed, the days with no reported protests are registered as having had zero protesters. The analysis for "days of protest only" has 20 data points, for the 20 days in the period that registered a *#rezist* street protest. The day after/before is relative to the first data point (dataset1) in the description "dataset1 vs dataset2". Therefore, "Correlation Day Before" for "Tweets vs Protesters" means the correlation in between tweets today (t), and protesters the day before (t-

1). Furthermore, in order to be concise in an already large table, I have **bolded** moderate and strong correlations (larger or equal to 0.5) and underlined the statistically significant correlations (calculated p<0.05) instead of providing the actual coefficient.

Table 5

Facebook Insight Data, Tweets, and Protesters; August 25, 2017, to August 14, 2019		Correlation Same Day	Correlation Day Before	Correlation Day After
Every Day of the Period (n=720)	Tweets vs Protesters	**0.648095**	**0.523466**	0.190249
	Tweets vs New Likes	0.408784	0.325486	0.227935
	Tweets vs Engagement	0.433066	0.356477	0.290277
	Tweets vs Total Reach	0.435357	0.362396	0.283843
	Tweets vs Impressions	**0.538558**	0.433563	0.344465
	Tweets vs Unlikes	0.313571	0.247982	0.243882
	Protesters vs New Likes	0.345959	0.153327	0.224085
	Protesters vs Engagement	0.351297	0.167265	0.265245
	Protesters vs Total Reach	0.357726	0.196983	0.269935
	Protesters vs Impressions	0.431828	0.153327	0.224085
	Protesters vs Unlikes	0.245153	0.107368	0.237781
Only Protest Days (n=20)	Tweets vs Protesters	**0.824959**	**0.854616**	0.135979
	Tweets vs New Likes	0.295752	0.210510	0.269353
	Tweets vs Engagement	0.403983	0.196323	**0.499123**
	Tweets vs Total Reach	0.342910	0.417102	**0.516814**
	Tweets vs Impressions	0.255159	0.250389	0.374126
	Tweets vs Unlikes	0.170006	0.034728	0.075189
	Protesters vs New Likes	0.413259	0.097446	0.098670
	Protesters vs Engagement	0.401545	0.008402	0.154823
	Protesters vs Total Reach	0.397823	0.272573	0.213573
	Protesters vs Impressions	0.182039	0.107363	0.078968
	Protesters vs Unlikes	0.336962	0.145686	0.040005

At a glance, the table shows that the relationship between the metrics of the *Corruption Kills* Facebook page and the number of tweets or protesters is generally weak. With no "surprises," only 3 values out of the 60 measured have moderately strong and significant correlations, with the relationship in between Tweets and Protesters being stronger in all cases. This indicates that the Facebook page is not closely related to the *#rezist* movement. An unsurprising finding given that the page appeared before the 2017 protests and, while it was used during the *#rezist* movement, it did not serve exclusively as a platform for the #rezist activists even if there certainly was overlap, as explained by Bădiță in his interview (2019). Still, all the significant values for the Facebook page indicate a reactionary effect to the protest, just as in the case of tweets, with stronger correlations for the activity of the page (likes, engagement, reach, impressions) and the number of protesters *the day before*. If there was intense (effective) organizing activity on the page, even with the noise of unrelated posts, there should have been a stronger correlation in between the size of the protests one day, and the activity of the page the day before. Instead, values for *the day before* are slightly but consistently larger, even at the low correlations determined. Finally, the data indicates that at least in the case of this specific Facebook page (even if one of the largest), studying tweets is

more pertinent to the movement, despite a relatively lower number of Tweeter users as compared to the number of Facebook members. At any rate, the online seems to follow the offline. In the case of Twitter, people tweet during and after the protest. In case of Facebook, the most popular social media platform in Romania, the numbers also do not confirm what the Romanian TV channels have deemed "an online revolution." Perhaps it is flashy news titles like this that made many believe that "virtual spaces were more important than physical spaces to the success of the movement."

Moving away from purely quantitative data, but with the limitations describe before in mind, one of the findings of the questionnaire that stood out is that while most people seem to believe virtual spaces were instrumental for the activism cause, they think Facebook, not Twitter, was the platform that was most important. While the Corruption Kills page analyzed above did not corroborate that opinion, Facebook as a platform for the #rezist movement was not analyzed, with smaller groups and pages exclusively dedicated to *#rezist* perhaps registering higher correlations than the ones above. Unfortunately, Facebook's tighter privacy settings and core platform design prevent big data collection, unless an insider offers access to the researcher, as in my case above. On Facebook, people need to be connected through a friendship or be part of the same group to see each other's posts (one of the reasons why Twitter has been used by other activism movements more extensively), and administrator-level access is required for data analysis on pages and groups. However, one metric that is publicly available is the number of likes for a page, and the number of members for a group. The semi-official *#rezist* page has "only" ~31.000 likes, the Rezist Tv Facebook page has ~36.000 likes, and the largest *#rezist* Facebook group has ~14.000 members. These numbers are minimal compared to the number of activists that protested in the street, and the difference is even more significant when put into proper perspective.

Being physically present in the street is difficult and costly. First, it requires the time to go, participate, and return. It is also uncomfortable, especially in extreme temperature months such as February or August (when the largest protests happened). Furthermore, physical protests can be dangerous when police violence is not unheard of. Participation in physical protests is also time restrictive: one can participate in a large protest only when a large protest happens. In contrast, liking a page takes only a moment and can be done anytime. For example, the REZIST Facebook page has existed for about two and a half years. One could have liked it at any point in this time, from any location, and with negligible negative impact to them. Yet, the Rezist Facebook page has only about 5% as many people who *liked* it, as the most massive *#rezist* street protest had participants. This is highly counterintuitive if we were to believe that online platforms had a significant role in the organization of the protests. However, as Hagiu explained in his interview, he believes "it's a duty of a democratic system to be present in the public space." Furthermore, Deaconu agreed that during the demonstrations "it was hard to stay home, not hard to go and protest" (2019). The same sense of responsibility does not seem to exist for online activism actions.

When looking at the number of platform users, Twitter has a market penetration rate in Romania of approximately 1.75% (or ~350.000 people), and therefore many street protesters could not have engaged on the platform, unless registering a new account (another reason why I have been considering, so far, the relative fluctuations in the number of tweets, rather than

their absolute values). However, Facebook has 50% of Romanians registered with an account (Hootsuite 2019). When taking into account that the percentage of Facebook users increases in the urban areas where protests took place (with Romania's urbanization rate at 54%) it means that most street activists had a Facebook account and thus easy access to liking the rezist page or joining the group. The possibility that some users might have unlinked the REZIST Facebook page could have explained a small difference in between the size of street protests and the number of likes, but in this case, the gap is too wide. Even summing up the numbers of members of the largest Facebook groups (and making the implausible assumption that the members are distinct), the result still falls short of the number of people that took part in the largest protest. Moreover, it would be expected that a more numerous online community would be able to organize a larger protest. However, as Figure 20 shows, that is not the case. And while the exact data is unavailable, Badiță explained in his interview that during the largest protest in February 2017, Corruption Kills started with only 10.000 likes (2019). Finally, online bots can like a page and appear as real people, further increasing the size of the community. However, all protesters in the physical space are (at least for now - see Section 5.6) real.
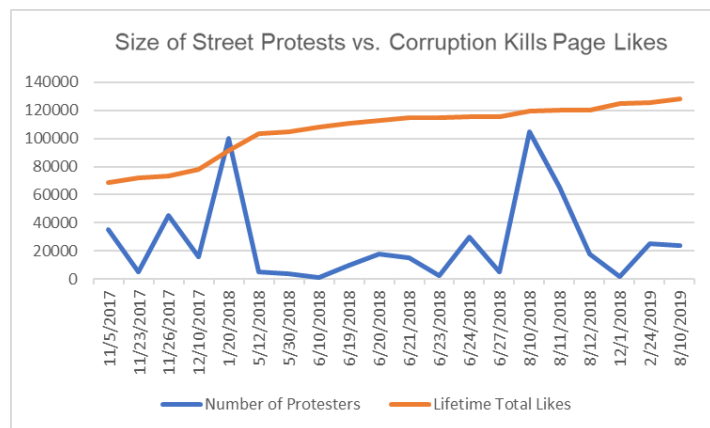

Figure 20

Still, even if the role of the internet is overestimated, there are distinct instances when the online realm, made its influence visible in the public squares. When focusing on the physical movements themselves as they happened in the streets, some germane details come to light. During one of the earlier *#rezist* protest, the activists (more or less spontaneously) started simultaneously using their cigarette lighters and phone flashlights - an action that often happens on football stadiums or concert grounds to create appealing visuals and connect the participants into one common process. The aerial pictures of the protest's light display quickly spread online and within media outlets, having a visual representation of the thousands of protesters, each beaming a light (see Figure 14). The success of this action led a few activists with initiative to organize an even more impressive display of choreography, transforming the occupied square into a "human flag" (see Figure 21, middle photo), reminiscent of communist synchronized displays. The action was perhaps useless in that very moment, in the physical space, as few or none of the government officials were still in the building faced by protesters. However, the picture went viral on an international scale, bringing praise for the protesters and putting pressure on the government. Following, the protesters also staged a similar display of a European Union flag, but the smaller number of people and the repetition of the strategy brought less attention to the event.

Despite signs of unity and coordination, the *#rezist* movement is at its core based on connective (Bennett and Segerberg 2012), rather than collective action (Olson 1971), a keyframe for digitally networked activism. In the case of collective action, there is a unified

outcome resulting from a collective identity that has concentrated its resources. In contrast, connective action represents "the sharing of personal action frames on digital media networks and does not presuppose frame alignment" (Haperen, Nicholls, and Uitermark 2018). In the case of *#rezist*, the creators of the movement cannot be considered its leaders. From the discourse analysis as well as from the interviews, the protests and actions of online activism appeared as having a horizontal, connected, structure that has not always had a unified purpose. The heterogeneous network of rezist protesters sometimes had opposing views internally and was sending different signals externally. Moreover, with rumors of external financing not being provable beyond the "myth of the foreigner that intervenes in the internal affairs" of Romania, the leaderless, horizontal structure further fits the model for *#rezist* (Deaconu 2019, interview). Perhaps this is best displayed in the conflict that arose in between the initial creators of the *#rezist* hashtag and a journalist that legally copyrighted the logo and slogan in order to create a new political party that would oppose the government officials targeted by the protesters. DeClic responded with legal action, suing for intellectual property infringement, as they have not been consulted for the use of what they claim was their creation ("Îi lăsăm să fure #REZIST?" n.d.).

Figure 21. Connectiveness of physical displays and action with the digital space

In another instance of disagreement between the importance and role of virtual and physical activism, one protester criticized those who do not take action in the physical space of protest. The man's message can roughly be translated and summed up to "I did not hide behind a keyboard, I was arrested and fined 1000 lei by the gendarmerie for defending the national flag, while others were taking selfies with us and now are in Brussels" – in reference to a flesh mob being organized by *#rezist* in Belgium (B1.ro 2018). In the end, both the protester that was arrested, and those taking selfies or participating in the flashmob had the same general end goal of ending corruption, but the disagreement came from the necessity and effectiveness of their methods.

In spite of internal conflicts, the ability of the activists to bridge the online and offline realms goes beyond necessity and transcends in a meaningful connectedness. As observed with other street protests, the use of the *#rezist* hashtag (see Figure 21, top and bottom photos) on banners and placards brought by protesters is not novel to the Romanian demonstrations. This, however, shows that the hashtag character does not only serve a practical purpose online (by signaling to the code of the social media platform that the term to follow is a keyword, enabling searches and trends to be constructed around it). Instead, the hashtag serves as an additional symbolic meaning in the physical space, having people rally behind its powerful simplicity (Yang 2016). Moreover, besides the placards simply showing the *#rezist* hashtag, activists have

also made a significant amount of creative comedic material to be displayed on the streets (see Figure 22). While the creations are congruent with the broader demands and complaints of the activists, the humorous spin is not characteristic to traditional, "pre-hashtag" protests. Similar to the large-scale choreographies, the puns or bitter-sweet funny collages made them perfect candidates for going viral online. The placards are thus not only intended to be seen by people on the streets for a few hours, or the people following the news coverage for the day, but the message of the placards is also meant to be engaged with, shared, and retweeted on the internet, and therefore be on display for virtually an unlimited amount of time. It also comes to show that online spaces are not merely a means to an end for protesters; with a unidirectional relationship. Rather, the actions go full circle: from online to offline and then back to online.

Figure 22. Selection of comedic placards from the 2017 anti-government protests in Bucharest.

5.6. FURTHER RESEARCH AND CONJECTURES ABOUT THE FUTURE

While I have attempted to offer a complete picture of the studied problem, my research can be improved upon and used as a stepping stone for further academic inquiry. To begin with, some of the limitations of my study can be alleviated through financial resources, and, for example, the full Pulsar platform could be used for a more in-depth analysis of the Twitter network maps. Furthermore, my study concerns one specific movement in Romania. However, my methodology can be extended to other protests around the world for a comparative study, since both Twitter and Facebook are internationally available. This way, the correlations I have computed can be put into perspective, and something could be said about the differences in the nature of the movements. Finally, with the *#rezist* protests still being an active, ongoing, movement, this same study can be extended, and the data can be reevaluated once its actions can be considered finished. Then, the issued can be analyzed in its complete "start to end" form, from a historical perspective. Still, even for a retrospective study, data gathering should be a continuous, long term process, because even platforms as generous with their data collection as Facebook, still have a few years limit on the historical data archiving.

Moreover, it must be acknowledged that the questions posed throughout this thesis cannot have decisive, permanent answers, but rather explanations suitable for a specific case in the context of its space and time. With the internet continuously expanding, and technology constantly evolving, the core issue of physical vs. virtual space use is not one that can be definitively settled. What stands true for my study, can and probably will change in the not so distant future; from minor changes such as platform use habits, to major breakthroughs such as VR (Virtual Reality) and AR (Augmented Reality) technologies. Until recently, these technologies were only used by pioneers, due to the high barriers to entry (both in terms of costs and technical knowledge). Still, as time passes and the technologies become more accessible, more people from the general public start using them (see Figure 23). If in the case of this thesis the boundaries in between activism online and activism offline are clearly defined, even when there are strong bonds in between the two worlds, the issue can only get more complicated. With AR, one could place virtual placards that can only be seen in a particular physical space, by all users of a yet-to-be-developed platform. With VR, some could show dissent in the physical space through a physical android-like avatar. Even if they themselves are not present, they could still have a holistic experience of the protests. These science-fiction sounding speculations might be closer than expected, and a proactive, informed, study on how future technologies might change dissidence movements (before they even happen) could be a worthwhile endeavor.

Figure 23. Pokémon GO is a popular AR game that places virtual creations in physical spaces. Could AR banners become a common occurrence in tightly policed material places?

Yet, I believe that the current thesis accomplishes its intended purpose, without venturing into interesting, yet unachievable directions, leaving the path open for future research to pursue such a line of inquiry.

6. CONCLUSION

The Egyptian activist Hossam El-Hamalawy said, "The Internet is only a medium and a tool by which we can support our *offline* activities. Our strength will always stem from the fact that we'll have one foot in the cyberspace, and, more importantly, the other foot will be on the ground" (Hopkins 2012). This statement I believe perfectly applies to the case of the 2017-2019 *#rezist* protests in Romania. Throughout this paper, I explored the different possibilities and ways in which virtual spaces interact with the tangible realm, but there was no clear evidence that they are, as most questionnaire respondents believed, "more important than the physical spaces." Neither is there evidence that "online activism succeeded in overthrowing the Romanian government" (Costea 2017). Many activists, as well as third parties, seem to believe that virtual spaces are instrumental for a protest's success, not only by facilitating coordination in physical spaces but autonomously being perceived as a powerful method of amplifying the voices of dissent. Moreover, this research suggests that protesting in physical spaces has changed because of the existence and use of virtual spaces, with one of the main objectives of activists now being to create a spectacle offline, that will later attract attention online. By creating material worthy of being reported on by news outlets and shared on social

media, protesters are further spreading their message. Banners have a humorous twist and are often written in English, while protesters frequently make choreographic displays in the squares.

However, the current analysis reveals that while a physical presence in public squares is instrumental for a protest existence, showing dissent in virtual spaces is complementary, yet not enough on its own. The analysis of both Twitter and Facebook data shows that online activity is mostly reactionary to street protests, with online activity generally intensifying relative to the size of the protests on the day of the event as well as the days after. By contrast, there is a significantly lower correlation between online activity and the number of protesters the day before the street movements happen, pointing towards a minimal contribution of virtual spaces towards organizing physical protests.

Even with the costs of attendance significantly reduced in virtual spaces, the total number of people associated with the movement is much larger when congregating in physical spaces, than as they appear in cyberspace. In present-day Romania, where there are more mobile phone subscriptions than people, where there are 10 million Facebook users out of a 19.5 million total population, and where 77% of the people have access to the internet, the number of online engagements with the movement does not measure up to the overwhelmingly larger numbers of physical protesters. Therefore, it is hard to argue for an intricate organizational network developed online that was able to awaken and move the masses, when despite the disproportionate difficulty to physically protest, there are many more people who do just that but do not spare the second for liking a page or retweeting a post. Yet, even if the numbers of people engaging in online and offline activism was comparable, it is unlikely that politicians have been more afraid and felt the pressure to enact change from the chatter of a Facebook group with 15.000 members, than from the chanting of a square filled with 15.000 people. Revolutions and protests successfully happened in Romania, as they did most elsewhere, before the emergence of the internet and social media, and they will most likely continue to happen in the digital age just as well. While the internet changed some of the ways in which Romanians protest in physical spaces, it is unlikely that it determined the movement's existence or success. For example, choreographic displays of dissidence, and viral placards are indeed a novel appearance in the landscape of protest, a consequence of the eagerness to attract online attention, particularly form the international community. With a considerable part of the *#rezist* tweets being written in English, it is further proven that Romanians are not only addressing other Romanians, but are hoping to reach an international audience. In this case, virtual spaces transcend boundaries and bring citizens from all around the world closer to the Romanian protests. However, on the streets, it is still the Romanian people protesting for what is, at the end of the day, the country's internal struggle.

In the case of the Romanian protests, the hashtag *#rezist* seems to have become (if it was not always) more of a branding particularity, rather than the actual online hashtag that is mean to connect users otherwise disconnected through a shared common interest. The physical placards, t-shirts, and bracelets reading *#rezist*, the press articles, and media coverage referring to the *#rezist* movement, seem to have greatly outnumbered the original use of online hashtags. Perhaps Romania having a democracy score that places it in the same category with the United States in 2019, with a sometimes biased, but free press where all sides find partisan networks, and with rather rare violent state interventions against protesters, does not need online spaces
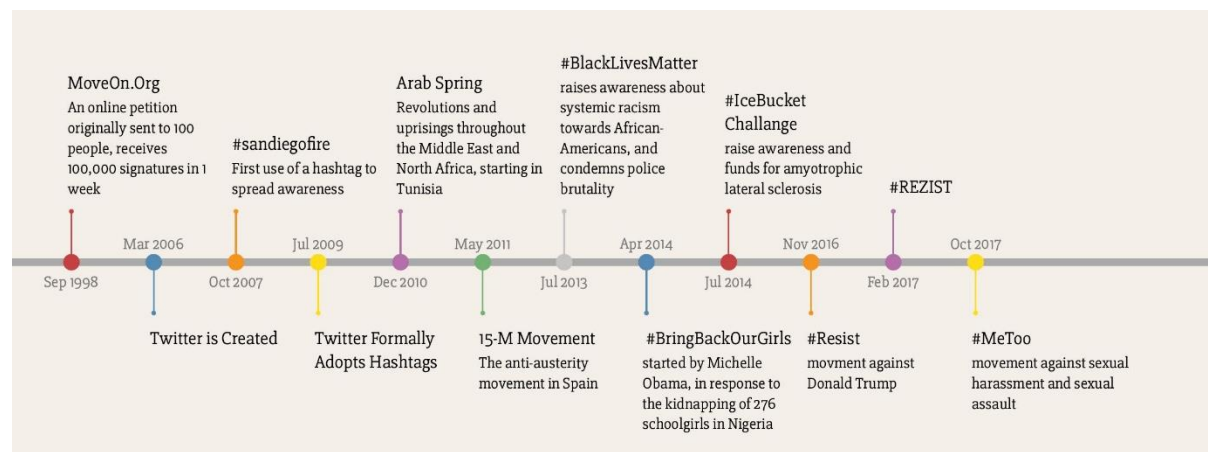
to retreat and regroup in. Yet there is always an appeal to novelty, and believing change requires new methods of engagement. It is therefore up to each individual activist to critically think about their actions and their impact, about their use of public physical space, or virtual platforms, balancing them and choosing how to act. However, so far in Romania, the resistance was solidly grounded in the physical world, with only flares of virtual latency.

7. Appendix

7.1. Historical Timeline of Romanian Dissident Movements

Won or Lost do not refer to absolute victories or defeats, but a general consensus regarding the results, pertaining to the demands put forward.

7.2. Timeline of Relevant Events for Online Activism

7.3. Interviews
7.3.1. Activist Interview Guide

1. Thank you for being willing to sit down for an interview, would it be ok if I recorded it?
2. Let's get right into it; why is the #rezist movement important to you?
3. Have you ever protested in the street? If so, what did you hope to achieve through a physical presence in the square?

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4. Are you a part of the online presence of the #rezist movement? What is your involvement and what are your goals?
5. How would the #rezist movement have been different in the absence of the internet?
6. How did, both online and offline, censorship and repression, affect the #rezist movement?
7. How did the #rezist movement emerge, get organized, and maintain momentum for almost 3 years?
8. What is the relationship between different #rezist participants? What brings you together, and what sets you apart?
9. If Romania would be a totalitarian state where no street protests would be allowed, but somehow the internet would be freely available, what effect do you think that would have had on the #rezist movement?
10. There have been accusations in the press that #rezist participants are paid by foreign interest groups wishing to destabilize the country, how do you respond to that?
11. Finally, do you have any notable story related to #rezist? Is there anything else you think might be worth mentioning?

Romanian Translation:
1. Va multumesc pentru ca ati fost de accord cu acest interviu. Este inregula daca inregistrez conversatia?
2. Sa intram direct in paine: de ce este miscarea #rezist importanta pentru dumneavoastra?
3. Ati protestat vreodata in strada? Daca da, ce ati sperat sa obtineti printr-o prezenta fizica in piete?
4. Daca sunteti parte din prezenta online a miscarii #rezist, care va este implicarea si are va sunt obiectivele?
5. Cum ar fi fost miscarea rezist diferita in absenta internetului?
6. Cum au afectat cenzura si represiunea miscarea #rezist, atat in mediul virtual cat si in cel fizic?
7. Cum a luat nastere misacarea #rezist, cum a fost organizata, si cum si-a mentinut avantul pentru 3 ani?
8. Care este relatia dintre diferitii membri si participant ai miscarii #rezist? Ce va adduce impreuna si ce va diferentiaza?
9. Daca Romania ar fi un stat totalitar unde protestele de strada nu ar fi posibile, dar internetul ar ramane in continuare liber, care credeti ca ar fi fost efectul asupra miscarii #rezist?
10. Presa a facut acuzatii comform carora unii membri ai miscari #rezist au fost platiti de organizatii straine pentru destabilizarea tarii. Cum raspundeti acestor acuzatii?
11. La final, aveti vre-o poveste interesanta legata de #rezist sau este altceva ce credeti ca ar fi demn de mentionat?

7.3.2. EXPERT INTERVIEW GUIDE: FLORIN BĂDIȚĂ

1. Thank you for being willing to sit down for an interview, would it be ok if I recorded it?

2. You started the Facebook page Corupția Ucide during the #Colectiv protests more than 1 year before the start of the #rezist movement. How did you grow the Facebook Page, and what did you hope to achieve through an online presence?
3. The largest #rezist protest had almost 600.000 people present. How would you explain that their official Facebook page has 31.000 likes? Compare that with Corupția Ucide having 127.000 likes, while the largest protest had 30.000 people.
4. How do you think the protests would have manifested differently in the street if the online presence of the movement were to be removed from the equation?
5. Do you consider online activism a stand-alone form of protest, or only a tool for making offline activism more effective?
6. According to you, what are some of the differences in theme, effectiveness, and organization in between online and offline activism?
7. According to a small survey I ran as part of my study, I found that a majority of respondents believe virtual spaces to be more important than physical spaces for the #rezist movement. How would you comment on that?
8. You've met with President Klaus Iohannis. What was your impression of his understanding of online networked social movements?
9. Were censorship and repression a big concern for you either in the physical or virtual spaces of protest?
10. There have been accusations in the press that #rezist participants are paid by foreign interest groups wishing to destabilize the country, how do you respond to that?
11. Finally, do you have any notable story related to #rezist? Is there anything else you think might be worth mentioning?

7.3.3. Interview Transcripts
7.3.3.1. Interviewee: Dragoș Hagiu (DH)
Interviewer: Andrei Alberto Manca (AM)
Setting: Over Facebook Messenger; Bucharest, Romania (AM), Saint-Étienne, France (DH).
Date: 12.06.2019
Duration:18m 19s

(Start of Interview)

AM: Hello. Thank you for being willing to sit down for an interview with me, even if it's like this over the phone. As I told you, I will be recording it. So, let's get right into it. The first question is, "Why is the rezist movement Important to you?".

DH: It's not only the rezist movement that is important for me. I think that the concept of saying when you are not happy about something and screaming it out loud in the public, I think it is important. So from this perspective, the fact that the rezist movement is accomplishing this thing, it is important for me. So it's the concept of telling when you are not happy with something that is important for me. It is not only the rezist movement.

AM: Okay. But, have you ever participated in the street movements and, for the rezist protest, and if so, what did you hope to achieve through a physical presence in the square?

DH: So I think I, yes I participated in many many many movements that happened in Romania. Street movements from the early movements against the mining at Roșia Montană, to the protest that was with the justice against the politicians that took measures for the corruption and against the justice system. So, I think physical presence it's important to make a statement. By physically being in the public space, you send a signal to the politicians that you are active, that you are present, and you watch over them. I think, this is one of the... it's a duty of a democratic system to be present in the public space. And it is a duty that is quite forgotten.

AM: Okay. Have you also been a part of the online presence for the rezist movement and again, if this was the case, what did you hope to achieve and what was your involvement.

DH: So, mainly online I was just sharing some events or sharing some of the of the concerns that I had. So, again, I think it's not only about the rezist movement, I think it's more about the subject that I found important for me. So the fact that the rezist movement was just sharing some of my opinions, it's okay. And this was the important part. So being online, as being offline it is very important as being um… There are two ways to make your voice heard. So I guess now being online as we are all connected it is quite important. Because being online, it can help also to sharing the event on an international scale. So being on the spot it is important to make your voice heard for the local politicians. But being online as well, it makes a statement on the international level.

AM: Okay. So then how do you think the rezist movement would have been different in the absence of the internet?

DH: I think the rezist movement in the absence of the internet would have been less powerful. Because one of the way of organizing certain events is with the help of social media, and I think this plays a big part in it. It plays a part by keeping up the spirit. So seeing that everybody goes, that there are things that are going to be made. Also, the humoristic part that was kind of a part of all this. The satirical part is a lighter resolution of the problem.

AM: According to you, how did both online and offline censorship and repression affect the movement?

DH: So, I think the censorship was mostly on the local television scale. So online, I don't… I think it's quite difficult to speak about the censorship on the online medium because the way that some of the social media sites are made you are constructing bubbles of people that are sharing you interests. So you think that the majority of people are on the same side of you or share the same views, but they are a minority. And there is a gap between those two sides. There was uh… On the television part, there was an absence of covering so in this kind of scenario where the local media doesn't want to share and cover a subject, I think in this part, the online makes a difference. And then your voice is so loud that the local media can't cover it up. Well, most of the events were even with a, with the starting of those events, restarting the culture of coming in the streets. It was Rosia Montana in the start, the local media was not covering it. Numbers of participants were far lower in the local media then they were on the internet and focused on the internet.

AM: Was there any repression in the physical spaces from what you've seen?

DH: Oppression? At the beginning of events I didn't see it. Such a large physical oppression. So when you tell me about oppression I think, in every movement in every street action there were some agitators. But there wasn't a really a physical oppression because those people were, quite fast, rapidly identified and all the other people were just going away from them. So those people that were just like a Trojan horse for the police to go in… yeah, they were quite easily… Then the only rude part where there was something that was quite important was on the event that happened this year. The police intervened. And the local militia intervened with the gendarmerie and with the gases.

AM: So now the movement is 2.5 years old almost. How would you comment on it's…

[Call interrupted]

AM: Hello again. I think the call dropped there for a moment. I wanted to ask about the organization and maintenance of the movement momentum since it's been ongoing for almost 2.5 years now. How do you see it emerging and then maintaining itself for this rather long period of time?

DH: I don't know. I think it's a part of the mentality of the people that it is changing a little bit. So the people are starting to see them, the persons going out into the streets and being a little bit more involved. This is a process which is very skill-based. So the implication on the local levels are slowly increasing, but they are very slowly, slowly increasing. I think that being more involved at a local level, it will help to improve the current situation. Also being more involved like going to vote, being involved in local NGOs, and such and so forth, it's very important. So the part of a social activism that is starting to be more present is the fact that is going on, making the movement going forward. Then again, it's not only about the movement solely, it's about a certain type of, a certain type of implication that it's going on. So it's not the movement that makes it go on. It's the fact that the mentality is changing and the direction of the people are changing a little bit.

AM: Okay. And what would you say is the relationship in between all the different people that participated. What brings them together and what sets them apart from one another?

DH: So the people that are participating in the protests, I think that they are people that are not happy about the current situation. So there are a lot of issues with the current situation that, regarding also the economical improvement, regarding the corruption, regarding the fact that millions of people going, working on the… into the other European states. People that are in the movement are people of very different social backgrounds. But they are all together against the fact that the politic is not going in the right direction. I think this is the main interest and… of the people that are going into this movement is to have a better future. I know that those are generalities, but like, the fight against corruption, I think that the politicians are being quite transparent in wanting a more corrupt state and a more [inaudible] state. It's one thing that makes people come together and act. And we see this across the world as well. This is social media. And… so we see it all over the world.

AM: Okay. I also wanted to ask you if we were to imagine that Romania was a complete totalitarian state, but somehow the internet would have still been freely available. So, no street protests, but everything on the internet could have happened. What form do you think the rezist movement would have taken? How would it have been different if it could have happened only online?

DH: It would have been only fiction. I strongly believe that you have to have a physical form. And so I could not imagine a place where only the virtual part would be online. The fact that we would only have a virtual part would make it… it wouldn't make it real. It would, it would just make it virtual. And it would not have main, the same energy. So in a world where Romania would be totalitarian and internet would still be free, we would not see bubbles of liberty on the internet I don't think we would see general parts of libertarians on the internet. It would not be an open group; it would be a private group. We can compare it a little bit with the fact that during the communist era we had some radios that we could capture and listen to.

Am: Right. Romania Libera?

DH: Yeah. Europa Libera, yeah. But they were weak.

AM: There have also been some accusations in the press that the rezist participants were paid by foreign interest groups wishing to destabilize the country. How do you comment on that?

DH: As being there and seeing the people that were there, [inaudible] they were just people that were not happy about what's going on. Those movements were not having… there wasn't any political agenda to it. So we wouldn't see leaders from the political parties that were just saying 'Yeah. Now vote me because I'm into those movements'. They were just people that were just saying they were not happy about it. So yeah, there's also bad parts where politicians say 'Yeah don't trust them. It's not that they are not happy, it's just that they are paid by foreign powers that want to destroy us.' And this was used in the communist era as well by the "securitate," the security.

AM: So, nothing new?

DH: Yeah, so nothing new. Old techniques that we can see on all the protests everywhere in the world. It's mainly the same movie with just some other actors.

AM: Okay. Finally, do you have any notable stories related to rezist or is there anything else you think might be worth mentioning, that I didn't already ask you about?

DH: Yeah, beware of pick-pocketers. I got my phone stolen at one of the protests.

AM: How did that happen?

DH: I don't know, I just got my phone stolen. I even went to the police afterwards, but they did nothing, but… yeah

AM: I'm sorry to hear that.

DH: As in any other crowded place, beware of pick-pocketers.

AM: Okay, so there's a certain danger associated with…

DH: Well I don't know, it's just with every crowded place, beware of pick-pocketers. But yeah this does not, has not weakened my belief in being at least a little bit effective. It's just that I wasn't paying attention.

AM: Yeah. Hopefully, that doesn't happen again. Thank you very much for answering my questions and for taking the time to talk to me. Have a good evening!

DH: Thank you.

AM: Goodbye.

DH: Goodbye.

7.3.3.2. Interviewee: Marius Deaconu (MD)
Interviewer: Andrei Alberto Manca (AM)
Setting: In-person, Ministry of Education's offices, Bucharest, Romania.
Date: 23.07.2019
Duration: 18m 07s

(Start of Interview)

AM: Hello and thank you very much for being willing to sit down with me for an interview. As I told you before I will be recording it. First of all, why is the Rezist movement important to you?

MD: Well, it was an important movement for Romanian starting from 2017. Basically it was something like the highlight of the protests in Romania and definitely when you are speaking about the 2017 protests in the wintertime you are connecting them with the #rezist movement because it was quite [inaudible] movement and also they were quite vocal at that time. That was something like more generally then, but also it was important for me as a student leader because I have the opportunity to interact with them later in 2017 and at the beginning of 2018. So basically, I had the opportunity to see them as they were also outside of the box and also from the interior. That's why it's important.

AM: Okay. Have you ever protested in the street and if so, what did you hope to achieve through a physical presence in the square.

MD: That's a (laughs) misleading question for us in Romanian cause for instance, the first protests in the late period of Romanian, latest period of Romania appeared in 2012. After that, in 2013, there was an important movement for some ecological reasons. It was quite national wide.

AM: Roșia Montană, right?

MD: Roșia Montană, yes. But I didn't protest out there. It was the only protests that I skipped because I weren't in the same, I didn't have the same opinion as them. But I was protesting also in 2014, 2015, and 2016 protests which were connected to corruption especially. And yes of course in 2017 and after that my latest protest was something like in the 10th of August this year. So basically we have something like 7 years of history of protest in Romania. Definitely the protests in 2017 were the largest in our history. I think there were more people in the streets even if we compare them to the revolution of '89 to be sincere with you. And yeah, we had different reasons to protest. For instance, in 2014, 2015, 2017 or '18, but the link between protests it's basically the fight of people against corruption. It was something like a scream, not of desperation necessarily, but it was something like you needed to make a step forward and to show you are embraced the fight against corruption basically.

AM: But I guess my question is why did you decide to go in the street to protest. What did you hope to achieve through a literal presence out there in the street as a form of protest?

MD: Well, we have to look at the root of the every each protest. For instance, in 2015 we have the protest after the Colectiv fire and it was something like a pressure on the society it was a very difficult moment when it was something like you couldn't stay in your room or you couldn't stay in your home and do nothing or say nothing cause it was something like "Okay that's the limit for the Romanian government, that's too much. You have to make, you have to step down. You have to make something" - cause that's way too much" as in it as a very very very, a very harsh moment to have 60 youngsters killed by a fire who was provoked by um…

AM: So in a sense, it was "responsibility."

MD: Responsibility and…

AM: It was hard to stay home, not hard to go and protest.

MD: Yes, and also but it was also a sense of frustration. As in 'til that moment ok everybody saw corruption at a smaller or higher level but everybody, not everybody, but the most majority of Romanians closed their eyes. Okay? So that was something like an individual revolt against the corrupt people so we think that it was the most easiest way to show that we are embracing that way.

AM: And are you also part of the online presence of the rezist movement and if so what is your involvement and what are your goals there online.

MD: I was at some point. There were some groups and Facebook chat, messenger chat sorry, but only for a short period. It was something like between December 2017 and January 2018 they wanted to organize some protests but they were at the lower scale, something like 300-400 people each night and they had some peaks at the beginning of January when there were something like 30,000 people, 30,000 people. It was really cold so that was another reason for which I think people didn't came outside. But besides, I don't know, making or taking a photo badge with the rezist hashtag it was very viral during the beginning of 2017. I usually didn't want to connect my image to the rezist movement because it was very bad, I don't know, it was very bad appreciated by the government and I was in the position to negotiate some things with them and I didn't want to connect my image to them.

AM: Okay. How would you think the rezist movement would have been different in the absence of an online presence; without the internet?

MD: In Romania, basically?

AM: In Romania, yes. Do you think it would have been any more successful, less successful, more organized, disorganized? Just, how do you think it would have been different if there was no online presence?

MD: As a future historian I can connect some things to the history. Basically Romania was, I don't know, I think the most quiet country in the region when it's about dissidence and about, I don't know, people who raise their voice against the government. So basically we have a history of silence. So, I think in a regime which would have been more, I don't know, undemocrat, such a movement could not have been so vocal and basically could not have appeared. So that's my opinion.

AM: Okay. Next, I'd like to ask you how did both online and offline censorship and repression affect the rezist movement from what you know?

MD: I think that part of the leaders of the rezist movement had some very, I don't know, angry but very rude and very very violent posts on social media, on social media. So that's why they were banned, I don't know, for a couple of days or a month something like that. But there wasn't basically a censorship against them. Part of media was presenting them in a negative way but this also part of the game, so it's something they should have acknowledged before the coming publicly on their movement. I really don't think that there was censorship as in they, both the press that sustained them and the press who didn't sustain them, spoke about them so this is a very important thing. Basically, ask each Romanian, if he or she wanted to know things about rezist movement could very easily find out somethings but um, also the government invited them at some point, so they considered them as almost a dialog partner, partner for dialog, sorry.

AM: And offline, in the streets, was there any form of repression against the protesters?

MD: Yes, unfortunately. Even in February 2017 there were some violent outbreaks during the protests but it's very clear for us that there were some groups of football supporters that were quite violent and they were

AM: Instigators?

MD, Instigators, yeah. Also in other protests. And the violence was of the, I don't know police force and stuff like that, was concentrating on them. There were side effects, side casualties which weren't of course agreeable but there wasn't something like repressions against them. There were some protesters which were, I don't, know one of the most popular protests from rezist were quite violent and they received lots of fines. They went to the police station and stuff like that. But again, it was something that it wasn't like normal behavior from a proper citizen. I really can understand their frustration. But still the police force had enough evidence, not to jail them, but to went with them to the police.

AM: With the rezist movement, so they've been active for 2 and a half years. How would you comment on their momentum? Have then sustained their activism at the same level or how did it, how did it go over this rather long period of time?

MD: They were very visible in two moments. In the first three months of the 2017 and in the last months of 2017 and the beginning of 2018. The problem with them was 'cause they gave as the network of rezist protestors was quite a large network and for different views on that, they gave to the population different signals, which at some point were really variation was quite large. For instance, part of the rezist movement called for a protest on Saturday, the other part on Sunday. The average people cannot afford to spend two days of their free time protesting, or maybe in some important holiday as Passover, or other important holidays people were invited to protest. Once again, It's not okay to invite people to protest when it's about Christmas or Easter or something like that. At some point they lost some of their popularity during 2017 but again when there were problems with the judicial system or when some versions of civil society were urging for protest or some measures against the government the rezist movement was every time mentioned and part of the leaders were invited to express themselves publicly on this subject. Their momentum nowadays I think it doesn't exist 'cause there are only small groups of rezist protest which are constantly protesting. For instance, there's a very nice initiative in Sibiu where it's something like more than 300-400 days from when they've start, they are sitting in the front of the most important political party nowadays in Romania, which is also part of the government. And they are sitting something like 5 minutes every each day in the front of the party. But this is something nice, nonviolent, but it's also an exception. So basically they aren't any more so visible.

AM: So you are saying that there's a few different factions inside of the rezist movement. What would you say brings people together united under I guess this hashtag and what sets them apart, what are some of their differences? Ideological or otherwise.

MD: I think the most important thing that unites people under this hashtag is the fight against corruption because every each citizen in Romania is against corruption even though they don't take measures for that but at least at the, I don't know, declarity level they are against corruption.

The second thing is that there is something like a large sense of hatred against the most important political party, the social democrat party. Which was kind of rude when speaking about the communication with other categories of people in the sociality, basically with those kind of people that didn't vote for them. So it's like kind of a great frustration and you can see, I can give you some examples for that. And um, that political party also from [inaudible] in 2016 in November they received something like 43-44% of votes at the last election they received only 23%. So the drop down it was something like an expression that everybody, or at least a large part of the country really hates that party, which is popular connected to the former communist party, so that's why it's very easy to blame it or put all the bad things of Romanian in their side.

AM: There have been some accusations that the rezist participants have been paid by foreign interest groups wishing to destabilize the country. How do you respond to that?

MD: That's a very common line of argumentation for part of the political class in Romanian when it comes to protests. Cause 'til 2012, as I said to you, we didn't have this Romanian culture of protest, you know, as other countries, where people gathered together, gather when it's a problem, or when they want to highlight a signal for the government and stuff like that. So there isn't a culture, there wasn't a culture of protest in Romania so the politicians or other parts of the elite class maybe, weren't used to that behavior of the average Romanian to protest against something, so that's why as I don't know the Ceausescu told to the Romanians in December of '89 just before the revolution that factions of those who tried to get him down are paid by the foreigners, it's that myth of the foreigner that intervenes in the internal affairs of the state so basically they are perpetuating that thing, and rezist is something like another thing on the list, not something new or something which is approached individually

AM: This would be all the questions from me. Is there anything else that you think might be relevant or worth mentioning that I haven't asked you about?

MD: I don't think so.

AM: Okay. Then thank you very much for your time. This has been very useful. Thank you very much.

MD: Thank you also.

7.3.3.3. Interviewee: Florin Bădiță (FB)
Interviewer: Andrei Alberto Manca (AM)
Setting: Over the phone; audio has static. Bucharest, Romania (AM), Bacău, Romania (FB)
Date: 23.09.2019
Duration: 32m 15s

(Start of Interview)

AM: Okay. So, thank you very much for being willing to talk to me and have this interview. As I told you before, I am recording it, so thank you very much for agreeing to that as well.

The first question I would have for you is related to the page you started yourself, Corupția Ucide - Corruption Kills, during the Colectiv protests. And I was wondering how did you grow your Facebook page and what did you hope to achieve through an online presence?

FB: So, I founded the page after Colectiv, as you say, and the beginning like the first year of activity it was mostly about trying to propose to people different ways that they can get involved and become more informed so because it if we have much more citizens that are informed then they can, they are not so easily manipulated. And the activity for the first year was mostly… Do you know the FOIA, freedom of information request stuff? I started sending, because we had a technocrat government, I was hoping that with this technocrat government, they would be more open to implement some changes. And I send 3000 FOIA requests, actually 10 FOIA requests to 326 local authorities: so in total 3200 and I was asking them like how much does it costs the Christmas decoration, or how much do they pay for removing the snow, or which are the travels, in what countries and how much is the cost that the mayor, the vice mayor and the local councilor are paying for this trips.

AM: Yeah I watched your TEDx Talk on that, very interesting stuff and really amazing that you've managed to send so many requests that you were able to compute some data out of it. Also amazing how big the differences are between the most expensive and the cheapest cities or towns in Romania to clear the snow. You had something $65,000 per kilometer for some and 100 euros right, for others?

FB: Around like this I think it was six times more than some, from the lowest to the biggest, or the medium, I don't think I remember but yeah there were some crazy numbers. So this was one of the things that this government….the whole state and the government and local authorities… Yeah, they are trying to steal and they are able to steal because citizens, they don't know and not that many citizens sent FOIA requests or they will do stuff like that so they will hope they will get away with it because no one will check.

AM: Nobody will know.

FB: It was the aim of the project when I started it, and except this we did in the first year of Corruption Kills we only had one project, we had like 5,000 people except the Colectiv ones.

AM: Right. And the biggest Colectiv one was what, around 30,000?

FB: Uh, depends. Some people say 30,000. I think on the Wikipedia page someone was quoting 100,000 people but I'm not sure. I don't remember exactly. Probably 100,000 people there. But yeah, 30,000 for sure were there.

AM: Then let me ask you this, with your page of Corruption Kills you have about 127,000 likes when I checked a few days ago
FB: Yeah

Am: And with the Rezist official page, still a Facebook page, they have a lot less. They have 31,000 likes. However, their largest protest was 60 hundred thousand people. How would you explain the difference in number of protesters in the street and the number of likes online?

FB: So, first of all I don't know which rezist page cause rezist as an entity or at the team, it doesn't exist. Rezist is Corupția Ucide, it's probably [inaudible], but yeah in the same time it was all of the civic movement that existed in that took part in the protest that happened at the OUG 13 [abbreviation of "ordonanța de urgență 13", emergency ordinance 13, the official classification of the amnesty and pardon law] period.
AM: Okay. I was referring to the one that DeClic started but you're saying that's not just the only page that got involved and it was a bunch of them including yours that all collectively got organized.

FB: Uh, yeah that would be one of the things. Like uh, the majority of the protests that were happening there, the majority were happening via Corruption Kills page and probably some other pages are also doing [inaudible].

AM: Yeah. Yeah, no. That makes sense.

FB: Like when, before the OUG 13 Corruption Kills had around 10,000 likes. Something like that. 10,000-12,000 likes. Because I told you, we didn't do that much protest except one protest. We mostly tried to do like civic information and making the people aware about fake news, trying to find articles, translating articles. This was kind of the strategy. And then after the OUG 13, then we started being much more into organizing protests and also during that time the page grew from around 10,000-12,000 how much they were to 70,000 in a matter of weeks since…

AM: Do you remember around what time that date was when you made the jump?

FB: Uh, I think it was in 2017.

AM: Okay, right. During the large protests.

FB: Probably, I think also because we started doing from January, like before the OUG 13, we had already started doing protests and we had around, I don't know, 20.000 people. So making protests in advance of what would happen. So, yeah. Probably on January February was the big jump.

AM: Do you think the protests would have happened, manifested differently in the street if the online presence of the whole Rezist, Corruption Kills movement were to be removed from the equation?

FB: Like, people would have to go out directly and they would have to protests. I think because it was also the… it was really difficult to explain… like, what they changed in the law it was difficult to explain. Like, If you steal less than 20.000 Romanian RON, it's okay. There were much… much more things I did so a lot of people were angry. So I think what was the… what

we tried to do at Corruption Kills, all the persons, we tried to kind of channel all of the messages because there are a lot of people doing different messages and everybody wants something different. And we were trying to channel that in some specific areas. So instead of having 10,000 messages, have 10 messages that have a clear aim, and of course the first aim was to remove the OUG 13.

AM: So do you consider online activism to be a stand-alone form of protest, or is it more of a tool for making offline activism, offline protests more effective?

FB: I think if it's only online then you can't change that much. Like I don't know, you can look at Havas. Havas it's a website for activists were you sign petitions. It's kind of like DeClic in Romania, but international. And you have like millions of people signing it. And you sign something and you feel good but then not that… from my point of view direct action like protest or different actions are much more powerful and the offline definitely needs to happen if you want to convince the decisions makers. It's good to have a page and it's good to have all different pages and inform people, but without direct calls… it can be very complex. Protest is one of them, but, you can, I don't know, like you can have like such a movement where, I don't know, everybody puts their car a sticker, they send the same message. Or different things like that to spread a message or to do coordinated actions in the offline world. If you want to produce, I don't know, from my point of view like tenable change and, I don't know, [inaudible] change. If you only see something online, from my point of view I think you are not reaching the full potential.

AM: So then according to you, are there any differences in terms of theme… in terms of online and offline activism? If one of those petitions you're talking about that are being made online is somehow different in terms of theme from a protest that happens in the street. Are there different topics being approached or is it mostly the same kind of thing just done in different ways and different places?

FB: I think yeah it is with different places, location, places, people... and it is definitely different when we are in the offline world because of, I don't know, [inaudible] and the online activity depending on the anger that you have. Like for us, the organizers, for us it was more about "Hey, we have this event!" or something idea that we want to do and how we can spread it: use and leverage the community that we have to spread the message because we don't have a marketing budget. So we need to keep trying in the community [inaudible]. For others that, I don't know, their doing [inaudible]. Also on the online part I see as 'How can we spread our message or our messages. How can we engage the community in online and offline action?' Like on different projects, some of the things that we are doing… like 'Hey there will be a big protest" If there is a lot of people to enter, we created a Google form and other things where people can like 'Hey. If you have a car and you are coming to Bucharest and you have some free spaces add your car there so more people can come with you'. People will come in Bucharest; they need a place to stay. We were trying to do all of the little technical details.

AM: Right, logistical details that are still very important.

FB: Yeah. And when you are in the offline where you are directly implementing an event around that then it's more about, it's more about how do you manage the crowd, how do you interact with the crowd, what kind of motivation do you need to do. And also, like, on a personal level talking with different people, coordinating a team of volunteers, because we did volunteers for different things. Somebody kind of needs to speak with the Gendarmerie and other things like that.

AM: Speaking of Google Forms, I ran a small survey as well through a Google Forms and one of my questions was, I had a total of about 50 people responding, and one of my questions was if you believe that virtual spaces were more important than physical spaces for the rezist movement and a majority of people said "yes", that virtual spaces were more important. How would you comment on that and why do you think some people might believe that?

FB: Because, at least from their point of view where, for them most of the time even when they are working or things like that, they would go online, they would do their routine, I don't know, log on Facebook, do whatever they do and they would read what's happening. Like, because it is not realistic to be in the street all the time. So, you have to kind of do it in a kind of cultivated way. There are some people that are like 'yeah we should protest every day.' I think its bullshit. I think it's a good way of doing it. Especially if you cannot do a general strike or something.

AM: Right, it's not sustainable.

FB: Yeah. And from that point of view for the people that were kind of consuming the information and things like that, for them the online part was really useful because they were able to get information they were able to discuss they were able to I don't know… [speaks in Romanian to someone else] they were able to do all of this by reading what others were posting online and also by doing some comments.

AM: Okay. My next question is related to you meeting with the President, with Klaus Iohannis. And I was wondering, what was your impression of his understanding of how online network social movements functions. Did he have any comment or anything that he said related to that?

FB: One of the things when we had a meeting, like, he was saying that he was kind of ready to do the referendum. So, because we started like 'Hey, how do we approach it'… the organizations, at least the ones from the Rezist part. And we tried to describe all of this but yeah. He was already like 'Hey. I want to do it, let's start!' and different things like that. So, kind of the only time when he starts to touch on the point of it was that 'Hey. I will do this referendum, but I need your help. I need the help of everybody that was at the table. Because of your community, because of everything that was. I don't remember if he like… The whole thing was that he needs our help to kind of promote the referendum. It wasn't specific, but from that I could kind of understand. I think he's the first, for the moment, most followed person, political person in Romania on Facebook and things like that. And he has like a… I don't remember the full name. There was a guy that the ran Iohannis campaign and they did like hyper-targeting, like for each county. They had like different messages. They had like a different cover photo. [inaudible] so this kind of thing helped Klaus Iohannis get the presidency, so I think he's aware of the internet. I think he's using it badly for paid, but okay. Like I know

[inaudible] But that is my personal [inaudible]. But [inaudible] we didn't discuss that much about the online component.

AM: But it was implied.

FB: About how the question should be and how people would integrate it and different things like that.

AM: Switching gears a bit. Was censorship or repression a big concern for you either in the physical or virtual space when you were running activist movements or protests?

FB: I remember I was scared in 2012 when I did my first protest in… and then football gallery started fighting with the gendarmerie and things like that. I remember going home, and before entering the house I was looking around to see if I'm not followed and things like that. So, I was afraid for my life. But uh…. Can you repeat the question?

AM: Just if censorship or repression is a concern for you now. Either when you protest in the streets or when you organize or get engaged with activist movements online

FB: The biggest problem that we had during the protest is that there were some companies like [inaudible] and other companies that, they provide [inaudible] to people participating in protest and stuff like that. And then the Romanian fisc, the IRS, Romanian IRS came, come after the company and made control. They control them. And then this kind of discourage them from participating. And we he had a lot of companies that were speaking with them and we were like 'Hey. We are doing this and we are trying to engage the civil society and make political reform' and a lot of the companies were like 'Yeah you are doing a really good job. We cannot help you.'

AM: Okay. They were afraid?

FB: Yeah. So, from this point of view there were different companies that kind of self-censorship themselves because of the repression. We got some death threats, there were people that were saying 'Hey, I will stab a knife through your heart' and then he was giving me a photo like 'I've seen you at the protest how well you did for this and this and this'. So yeah, this is one of the realities of this and police did nothing. They let the man escape. I was expecting the police to educate themselves, but no, they did not care. There was also a lot of hate coming especially from Antena 3 and Romania TV, and all of them connected to what we had, where we would get, I don't know, every… every week they would dedicate a show: Gâdea or Mircea Badea, some of the most-watched shows they would tell a lot of lies about us, they would invent stuff, they would say we are paid by Soros and all of the other things.

AM: Yes, so speaking about that. You got a lot of accusations, "you" not personally, but as a group, rezist got a lot of accusations of receiving money from foreign interest groups that wished to destabilize the country. How do you respond to all of those accusations?

FB: Like, for us, when we did the protest, like for the whole protest that we did. I can only speak for Corruption Kills. We got donations, I think we had a $10,000 donation. And we explained transparently what we did with the money. So… and also all of the donation comes from private individuals. And all of them, well 90% of them, probably they were Romanian people. Either living in diaspora or in Romania that donated. From that point of view for us, there was no money that entered from nobody. And also like, even now we in 2019, for the moment we are just an informal group. We are not yet an NGO, a common NGO. And yeah, it's the same rhetoric that we are seeing in Hungary and in Poland: foreign intervence and foreign blah, blah, blah. This is so bullshit that they are trying, the press that is kind of with them, are trying to spread. Because this works, especially for older people that, I don't know, they are more easy to manipulate or they don't have nothing for thinking, and to kind of make people doubt about this. Like 'Ah yeah but, definitely' Kind of the idea is that, like, 'Hey these people are going and are protesting and definitely they are paid or definitely they have some interest from somebody doing that and you cannot do it like this and not get paid. And yeah, this is what they are kind of trying to do, to convince people that they have been more than this. A lot of people love conspiracy and things like that and for some of them probably it is work. At least he's gonna' polarize people because there are people that offer to be in the protest. And there will be Realitatea TV saying they got 80 Lei, 50 for them and 30 for the dog, and they'd say 'What the fuck?!' They are fucking crazy. So yeah, for the people that are protesting they will kind of make them untrusting televisions] And for the other people, some of them probably they will take the bait.

AM: Yeah. So a lot of misinformation from the mainstream media.

FB: Yeah. And also, one of the things that happened to all the civic groups. We are attacked all the time by Antena 3, and Romania TV and all the others, but the other side like except DIGI that, kind of invited us, and Realitatea TV, Pro Tv, Antena 1, Prima, I don't know, all of the others televisions networks, the simply never invited us to any, I don't know, any shows, any nothing. So you will have one side that will get some messages on the… on the propaganda of PSD. And also, on the other side, except the online community that we have, and we promote via them, nobody was staying outside. Nobody was telling our story. Our angle of, I don't know, why we are doing, how do we finance it, and other stuff like that.

AM: Right, so they weren't showing both points of view. They were just one-sided.

FB: Yeah. And others were just ignoring us, so from this point of view, yeah, we kind of didn't have that much way to promote it.

AM: I think these are all the questions from me. Is there anything else you'd like to add that you think might be relevant?

FB: Uh, tell me again so kind of what the angle of your research was aiming.

AM: So, I'm looking at the relationship in between virtual spaces and physical spaces when it comes to protests, and I am studying the 2017-2019 protests in Romania as a… as a case study.

So, anything that maybe I've missed asking you, if you think there's something that you need to add.

FD: Do you know about [inaudible]?

AM: Uh, sorry. Can you say that again?

FB: Do you know about Contract Romania?

AM: Uh, no. Please tell me.

FB: Contract Romania is one of the groups, like, one of the things that happened after 2017. It was, okay we had the big protest and then we kind of stopped. People fought the OUG 13 and some of them it was enough. And after that, there was a lot of city groups that started happening Aradul Civic, or Glați Rezist, Brașovul Civic, Umbrela Anticorupție Cluj, there were a lot also in diaspora, and also inside Romania. And I think it's one of the concrete examples of the things that happened. Like, they created local communities that could support the local needs, make people informed there, and this is kind of the online community part. But, some of these occupations, now they come like] NGO and they are doing different programs in the community. Like going and cleaning a park, or doing some walks or inviting some people and speaking about, I don't know, civic involvement, or stuff like that. And I think this is some of the results and this is also kind of the symbiosis between online community that is needed for offline events, especially the protest. Like, in a lot of cities, usually, it is the local host that organizes the protests and they are giving co-host to us, to other city groups on the national level.

AM: Okay. Yeah, thank you for mentioning it.

FB: Yeah, I think they have right now, I don't know, 20 - 30 members in Romania now. I don't know if they updated the website. The new members that joined in. After 2018 with the 10th of August, the diaspora community kind of become more involved or more visible. Like, probably they were visible before, but after that started playing also bigger roles and get more involved with what's happening

AM: Okay, yeah. I took some notes of that…

FB: I would also add, we started the Activist's House, which is a physical space in Bucharest. Because protests, like you go there for a protest and then you leave and then nothing practically remains in that space. Okay, the memories and stuff like that. But then everybody goes home and stuff like that. So for us, it's one of the crucial things to have this house where people can meet and they can start working on projects. They can protest, they can bring the bigger change to the world, because people can meet there, people can create projects, people can do much more things.

AM: So in a way it would be just like an online page where people discuss and share ideas when they're not protesting. But this would be an actual physical space where people could interact and meet in person.

FB: Yeah

AM: Okay.

FB: From my point of view I think it's more powerful than just online. Because, I don't know, like especially because you have different types of personalities. You have people that are really good online and they prefer to keep online. But a lot of the people I know you have another connection with a person when you can discuss face to face and you see that person. [inaudible] more easily when you see that person and you know him compared to 'Well, we just speak online. I don't know much about this person'.

AM: Yeah, sounds like a really good idea. I hope it moves forward and you guys succeed with it and some good things will come out of it.

FB: Yeah and there is, like we have this and there is also somebody in Alba Iulia, it's called Forum Apulum, and they also have like a civic house there.

AM: Okay, so it's not just Bucharest. There's a second city?

FB: Yeah. Alba Iulia.

AM: Yeah. Thank you very much for all your answers and all the other information you gave me. This has been very useful. I will stop the recording now. So yeah, thank you very much again.

FB: Thank you also.

7.4. Pulsar Original Graphics
The Images below Tweet Volume per Day, by Hashtag or Hashtag Group: 2017, 2018, 2019 (until August 15)
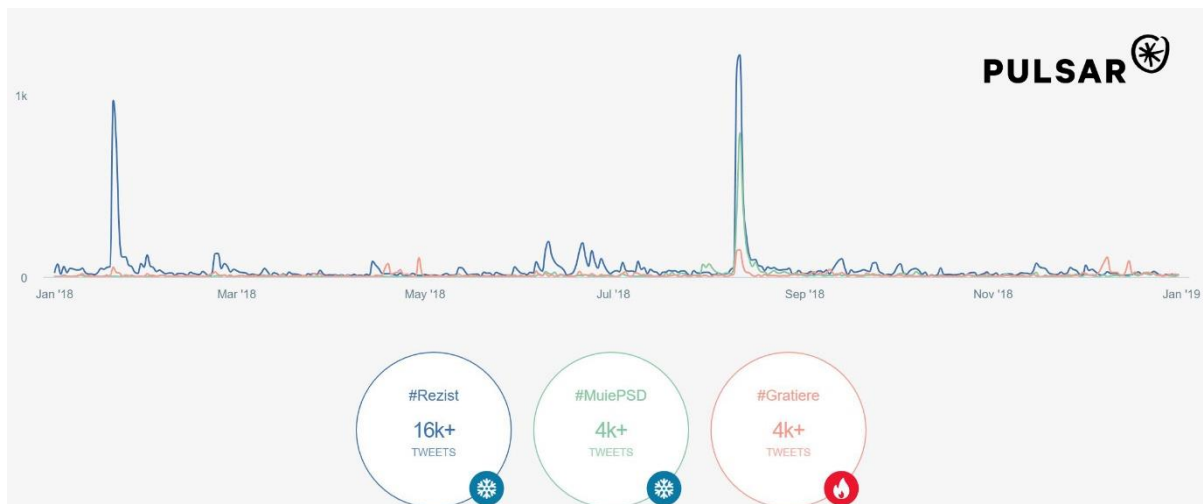
Questionnaire on the Relation of Physical and Virtual Spaces in Regard to Dissent

Please fill this questionnaire honestly and to the best of your knowledge. Skip questions you don't want to answer, or don't know how to answer, but please keep in mind that a complete questionnaire is very helpful to me. Thank you!

No need to read this paragraph, but if you're curious to why I need your help, here's a brief explanation. I am a master student in the 4Cities urban studies program and I am writing my final thesis on the relationship between dissent formation, organization, and manifestation in virtual and physical spaces. I have chosen as a case study the #rezist movement that took place in between 2017-2019 in Romania, with the largest and most frequent physical demonstrations in Bucharest. As part of my methodology, in order to better understand the phenomenons at play, I am sharing this fixed form questionnaire as a quantitative data gathering method. I plan to aggregate the data obtained and use it to construct graphs and charts that should shed some light onto my research questions.

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Questionnaire on the Relation of Physical and Virtual Spaces in Regard to Dissent

Personal Data

What is your gender?

◉ Male

○ Female

How old are you?

○ Under 18

○ 18-24

◉ 25-34

○ 35-65

○ Over 65

Are you a Romanian Citizen?

◉ Yes

○ No

Do you currently live in Romania?

- ⦿ Yes
- ◯ No

What income group do you consider your household?

- ◯ Lower Class
- ◯ Lower-Middle Class
- ⦿ Middle Class
- ◯ Upper-Middle Class
- ◯ Upper Class

What is your highest level of education (completed or in progress)?

- ◯ High School Diploma or Lower
- ◯ Undergraduate Degree
- ⦿ Postgraduate Degree

On average, how many hours do you work/study each workday?

- ◯ Less than 3
- ◯ In between 3 and 7
- ⦿ In between 7 and 9
- ◯ More than 9

On average, how many hours of personal time do you spend online each day?

○ Less than 1

◉ In between 1 and 3

○ In between 3 and 5

○ More than 5

How often do you use each of the following online social platforms?

	Multiple times a day	At least once a day	At least once a month	Less than once a month or never
Facebook	◉	○	○	○
Twitter	○	○	◉	○
Youtube	○	○	◉	○
Instagram	○	○	○	◉
Reddit	○	○	◉	○
4chan	○	○	○	◉

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Questionnaire on the Relation of Physical and Virtual Spaces in Regard to Dissent

Values and Interests

How important are politics to you?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Important	○	○	○	●	○	Very Important

How important are social issues to you?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Important	○	○	○	●	○	Very Important

In general, do you share your social/political ideas?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	○	○	●	○	○	Always

How often do you follow political coverage of Mainstream Media News outlets (TV, newspapers, radio,or respective official websites)?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	○	○	●	○	○	Daily

How often do you follow political coverage online (blogs, vlogs, internet podcasts, social media groups or feeds; not including mainstream media outlets' websites)?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	◯	◯	◯	◯	◉	Daily

How influential were each of the following to your opinions on political/social issues?

	Not Influential	Slightly Influential	Moderately Influential	Influential	Very Influential
Family	◯	◉	◯	◯	◯
Friends	◯	◯	◉	◯	◯
Formal Education	◯	◯	◯	◉	◯
The Internet	◯	◯	◉	◯	◯
Mainstream Media	◉	◯	◯	◯	◯

How informed would you say you are, in general, about the Romanian #rezist protests of 2017-2019?

◯ I have never heard of the protests, and therefore I know nothing about them.

◯ I have heard of the protests, but I know very little about them.

◉ I am somewhat familiar with the protests.

◯ I am quite knowledgeable of the protests.

◯ I am very well informed about the protests.

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Questionnaire on the Relation of Physical and Virtual Spaces in Regard to Dissent

Perception of the #rezist Movement

How would you rate the importance of each of the following information channels, in regards to the #rezist movement?

	Not Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Important	Very Important
Twitter	●	○	○	○	○
Facebook	○	○	●	○	○
Online News Outlets	○	○	○	●	○
Other Internet Sources	○	○	○	●	○
TV News, Radio or Printed Journals	○	●	○	○	○
Discussions with Friends	○	○	●	○	○
Discussions with Colleagues	●	○	○	○	○
Discussions with Family	○	○	●	○	○

How would you rate the following statements in regards to the #rezist movement?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
VIRTUAL spaces were instrumental to the movement.	○	○	○	○	◉
PHYSICAL spaces were instrumental to the movement.	○	○	○	◉	○
The movement was overall very successful.	○	○	◉	○	○
False information was spread through Mainstream Media.	○	○	○	◉	○
False information was spread through Alternative Media.	○	○	○	◉	○
Activity in virtual spaces helped organizing physical protests.	○	○	○	◉	○
Activity in virtual spaces helped attract international attention to the physical protests.	○	○	○	◉	○
Virtual spaces were more important than physical spaces to the success of the movement.	○	○	◉	○	○

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Questionnaire on the Relation of Physical and Virtual Spaces in Regard to Dissent

Engagement

Have you ever participated or engaged with any form of sociopolitical movement or discussion, either in the virtual or physical space? (commented on a political post, shared a social issue article, went on strike etc. included)

○ No.

◉ Yes, but not in the #rezist Romanian protests.

○ Yes, including the #rezist Romanian protests.

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Questionnaire on the Relation of Physical and Virtual Spaces in Regard to Dissent

Engagement with #rezist

How often did you participate in the #rezist physical space demonstrations if provided with the opportunity? (street protests)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Always

If you did participate, how? Select all that apply.

☐ Physically being present: marching, standing.

☐ Bringing visual aids: banners, posters, placards.

☐ Chanting or shouting.

☐ Participating in choreographic action (e.g. lighting up the phone or holding placards to forming patterns visible from above).

How often did you participate in the virtual space activity if provided with the opportunity?

	1	2	3	4	5

Never ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Always

If you did participate, how? Select all that apply.

☐ Posting/Tweeting about the movement.

☐ Commenting on movement related posts.

☐ Liking movement related posts.

☐ Sharing/Retweeting movement related posts.

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Questionnaire on the Relation of Physical and Virtual Spaces in Regard to Dissent

General Movement Engagement

Have you ever engaged with any movements in the VIRTUAL space? Check all that apply.

- ☐ No.
- ☑ Yes, regarding political issues.
- ☑ Yes, regarding social issue.
- ☐ Yes, regarding environmental issues.
- ☑ Yes, regarding issues that immediately and directly affect me (e.g. wage increase).

Have you ever taken part in movements in the PHYSICAL space? Check all that apply.

- ☑ No.

- [ ] Yes, political issues.

- [ ] Yes, social issue.

- [ ] Yes, environmental issues.

- [ ] Yes, regarding issues that immediately and directly affect me (e.g. wage increase).

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Questionnaire on the Relation of Physical and Virtual Spaces in Regard to Dissent

Incentives for Engagement

How important would each of the following elements be in convincing you to participate in a movement in VIRTUAL spaces?

	Not Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Important	Very Important
A worthy cause;	○	○	○	○	◉
Confidence that protesting will bring change;	○	○	○	◉	○
Confidence that there would be no negative repercussions against you;	○	○	◉	○	○
Confidence that participation would bring you praise;	◉	○	○	○	○
Receiving a material incentive or direct benefit from participating;	○	◉	○	○	○
Peers being involved in the movement;	○	○	○	◉	○

How important would each of the following elements be in convincing you to participate in a movement in PHYSICAL spaces?

	Not Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Important	Very Important
Good weather;	○	○	●	○	○
Proximity to the event;	○	○	○	●	○
A worthy cause;	○	○	○	●	○
Confidence that protesting will bring change;	○	○	○	○	●
Confidence that your participation would remain anonymous;	○	●	○	○	○
Confidence that there would be no negative repercussions against you;	○	○	○	●	○
Confidence that participation would bring you praise;	○	●	○	○	○
Receiving a material incentive or direct benefit from participating;	○	○	○	●	○
Peers being involved in the movement;	○	○	○	●	○

BACK   NEXT

Questionnaire on the Relation of Physical and Virtual Spaces in Regard to Dissent

Thank You Very Much for Your Time!

Whether you're protesting or not, remember that it's not all bad, and we can all make it better!

Feel free to leave your name and email bellow if you would be interested in a possible follow-up. This is entirely optional, otherwise, this quiz will remain completely anonymous.

Manca Alberto, aam583@nyu.edu

BACK   SUBMIT

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

Questionnaire on the Relation of Physical and Virtual Spaces in Regard to Dissent

42 responses

Personal Data

What is your gender?

42 responses

- Male
- Female

64.3%

35.7%
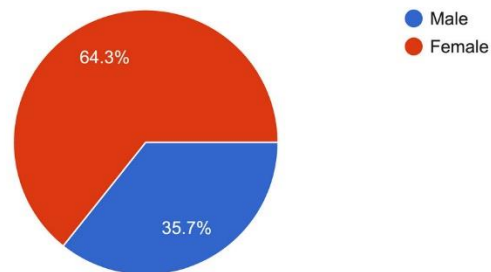
How old are you?

42 responses

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-65
- Over 65
- 18-25
- 25-35

14.3%

40.5%

35.7%
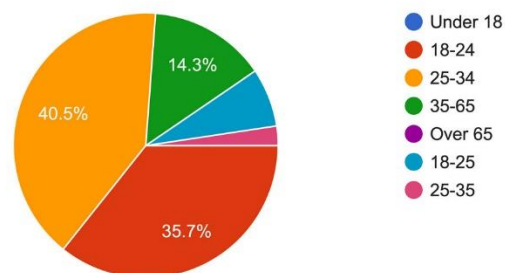
Are you a Romanian Citizen?

42 responses

- Yes
- No

21.4%

78.6%
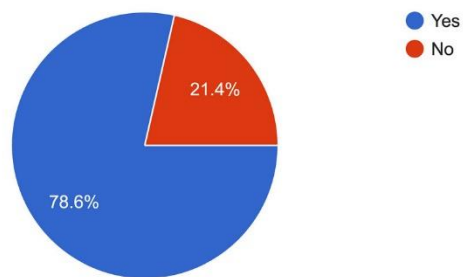
Do you currently live in Romania?

42 responses

- Yes
- No

47.6%

52.4%
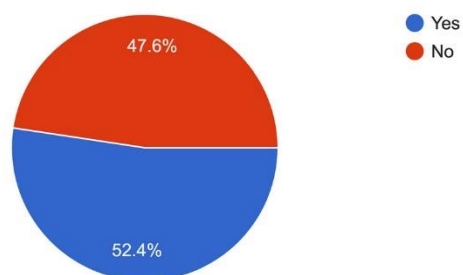
What income group do you consider your household?

42 responses
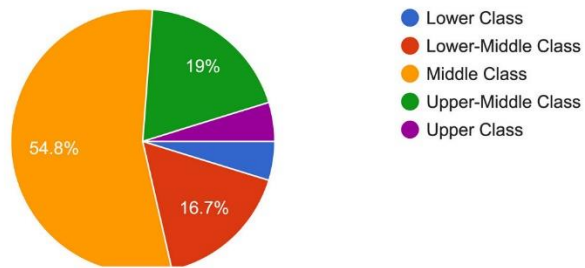
What is your highest level of education (completed or in progress)?

23 responses

- High School Diploma or Lower
- Undergraduate Degree
- Postgraduate Degree

34.8%
43.5%
21.7%
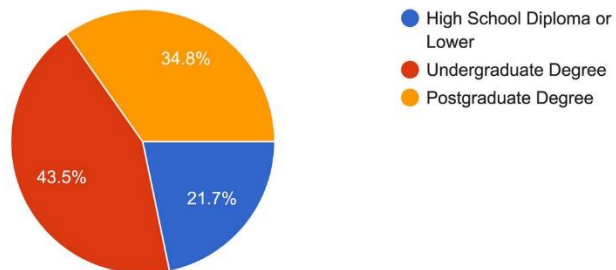
On average, how many hours do you work/study each workday?

42 responses

- Less than 3
- In between 3 and 7
- In between 7 and 9
- More than 9

40.5%
19%
9.5%
31%
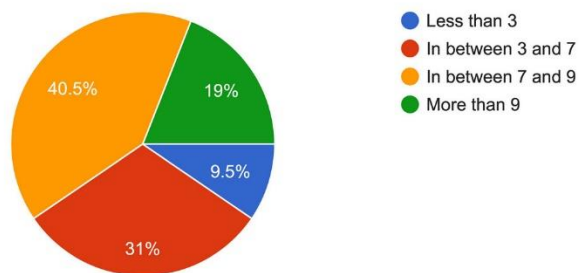
On average, how many hours of personal time do you spend online each day?

42 responses
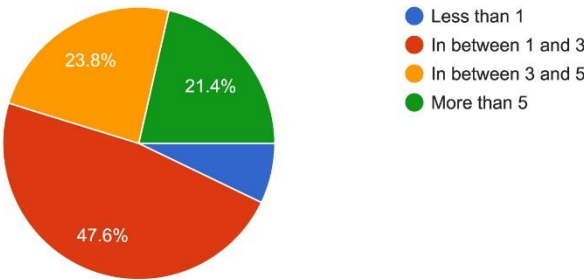
- Less than 1
- In between 1 and 3
- In between 3 and 5
- More than 5

23.8%
21.4%
47.6%

How often do you use each of the following online social platforms?

Multiple times a day At least once a day At least once a month Less than once a month or never

Facebook   Twitter   Youtube   Instagram   Reddit   4chan

How important are politics to you?

42 responses
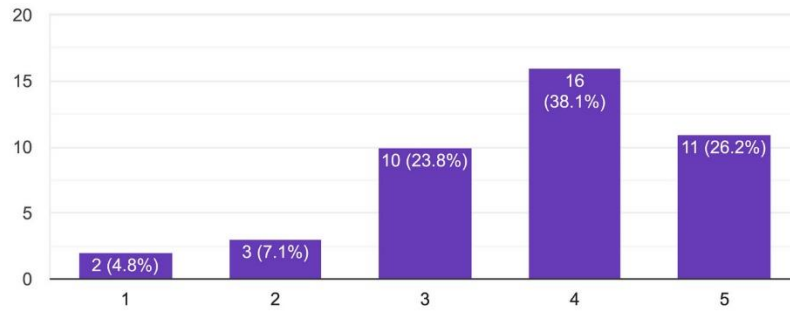
How important are social issues to you?

42 responses

In general, do you share your social/political ideas?

87
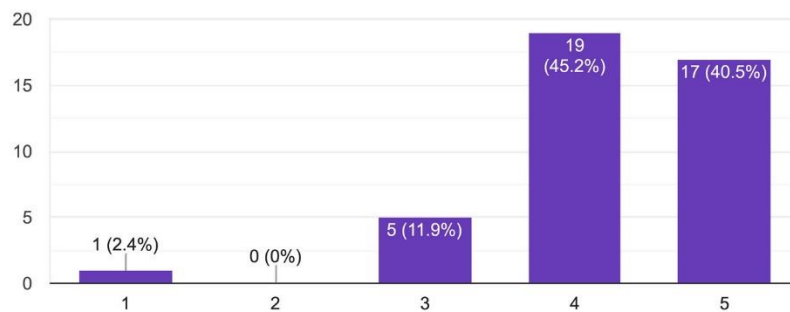
How often do you follow political coverage of Mainstream Media News outlets (TV, newspapers, radio,or respective official websites)?

42 responses

How often do you follow political coverage online (blogs, vlogs, internet podcasts, social media groups or feeds; not including mainstream media outlets' websites)?

42 responses

How influential were each of the following to your opinions on political/social issues?

How informed would you say you are, in general, about the Romanian #rezist protests of 2017-2019?

41 responses

Perception of the #rezist Movement

How would you rate the importance of each of the following information channels, in regards to the #rezist movement?

How would you rate the following statements in regards to the #rezist movement?

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Undecided** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

- VIRTUAL spaces were instrumental to the movement.
- PHYSICAL spaces were instrumental to the movement.
- The movement was overall very succesful.
- False information was spread through Mainstream Media.

- False information was spread through Alternative Media.
- Activity in virtual spaces helped organizing physical protests.
- Activity in virtual spcaes help attract international attention to the physical protests.
- Virtual spaces were more important than physical spaces to the success of the movement

Engagement

Have you ever participated or engaged with any form of sociopolitical movement or discussion, either in the virtual or physical space? (commented on a political post, shared a social issue article, went on strike etc. included)

42 responses

- No.
- Yes, but not in the #rezist Romanian protests.
- Yes, including the #rezist Romanian protests.

28.6%
42.9%
28.6%

Engagement with #rezist

How often did you participate in the #rezist physical space demonstrations if provided with the opportunity? (street protests)

11 responses
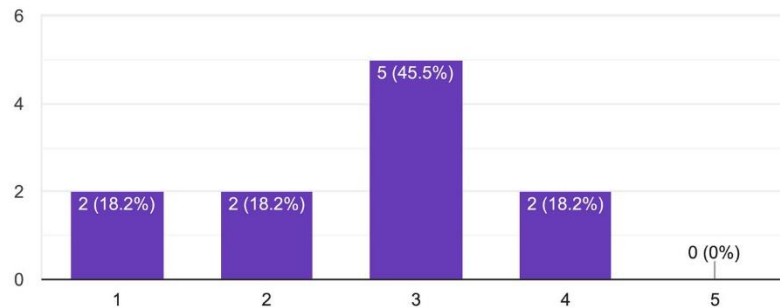
If you did participate, how? Select all that apply.

9 responses
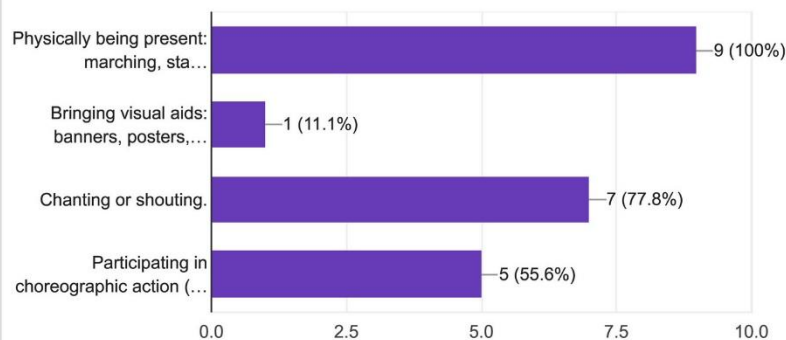
How often did you participate in the virtual space activity if provided with the opportunity?

10 responses
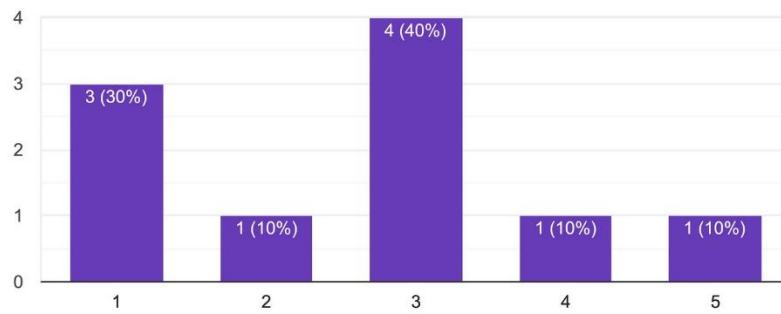
If you did participate, how? Select all that apply.

8 responses
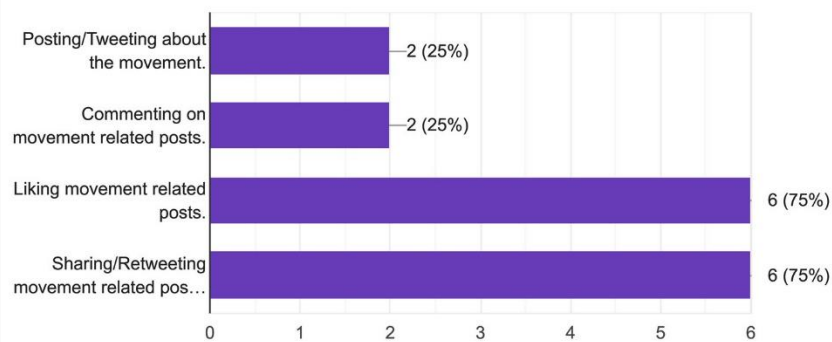
General Movement Engagement

Have you ever engaged with any movements in the VIRTUAL space? Check all that apply.

29 responses

No.	2 (6.9%)
Yes, regarding political issues.	20 (69%)
Yes, regarding social issue.	21 (72.4%)
Yes, regarding environmental issues.	13 (44.8%)
Yes, regarding issues that immediately …	11 (37.9%)
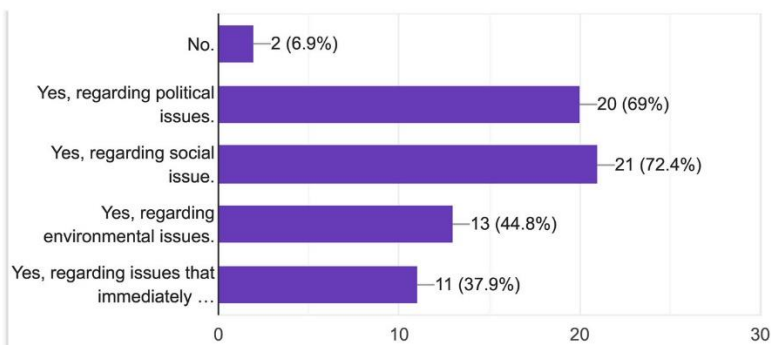
Have you ever taken part in movements in the PHYSICAL space? Check all that apply.

28 responses
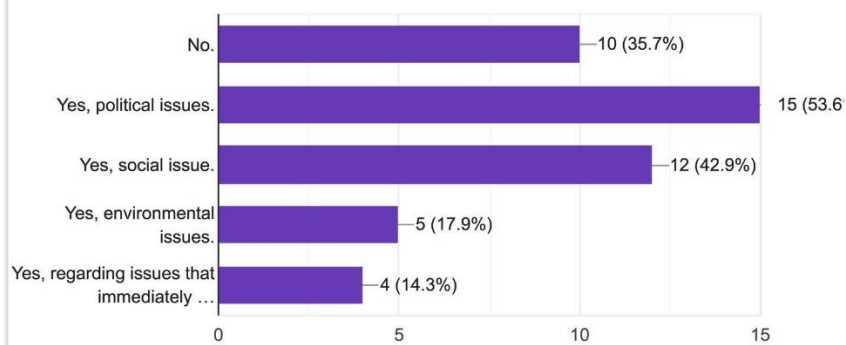
No.	10 (35.7%)
Yes, political issues.	15 (53.6
Yes, social issue.	12 (42.9%)
Yes, environmental issues.	5 (17.9%)
Yes, regarding issues that immediately …	4 (14.3%)

Incentives for Engagement

How important would each of the following elements be in convincing you to participate in a movement in VIRTUAL spaces?

94
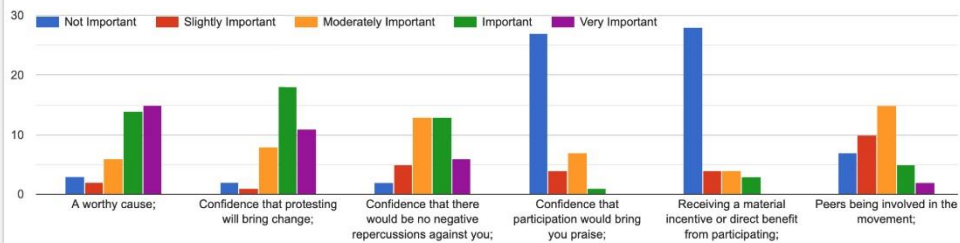
How important would each of the following elements be in convincing you to participate in movement PHYSICAL spaces?
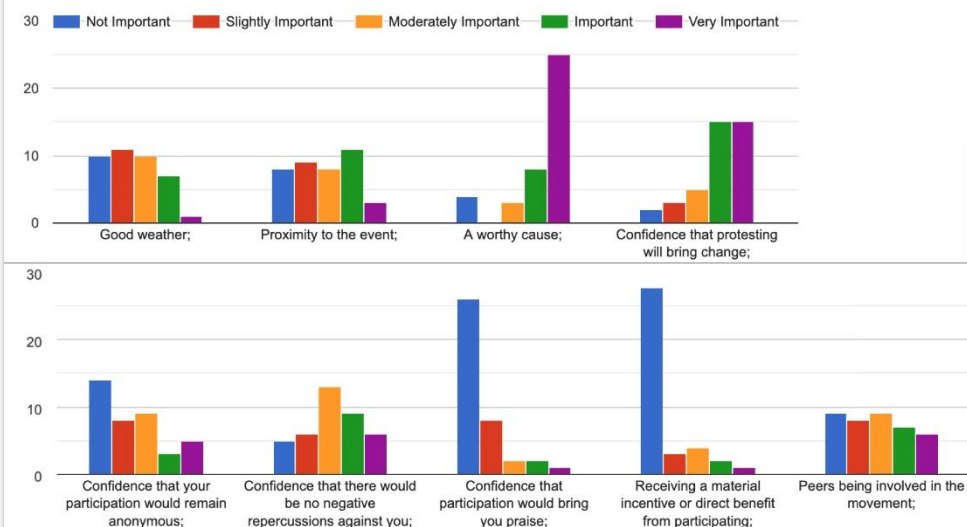
Thank You Very Much for Your Time!

Feel free to leave your name and email bellow if you would be

95

interested in a possible follow-up. This is entirely optional, otherwise, this quiz will remain completely anonymous.

Joseph Taylor. Jltaylor98@hotmail.co.uk

Paula, pauladozsa@gmail.com

A. al4022@nyu.edu

iftene_lavinia@yahoo.com

ioana.ciuca034@gmail.com

monica.albert94@yahoo.com

FLORENTINA C. - tinat6501@gmail.com

Ruxandra.stroe@yahoo.com

tataranu.vlad@gmail.com

My research related to this topic on https://www.stiri.ong/ong/civic-si-campanii/copiii-si-democratia-ce-cred-parintii-activi-social-chestionar

7.6. @Mentions Network Map
for #rezist August 9, 2019 to August 15, 2019
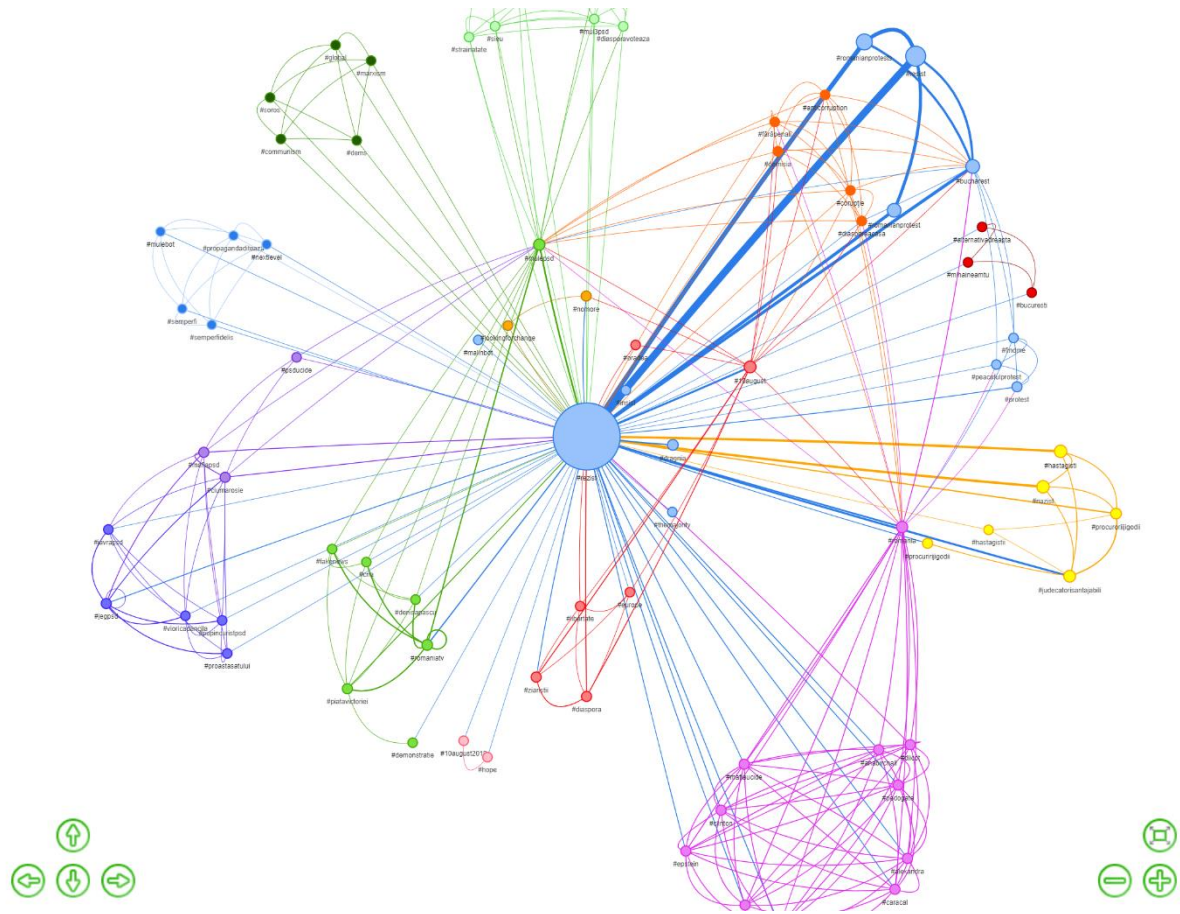
#rezist
Hashtag Intelligence Report
2019-08-09 to 2019-08-18

HASHTAGIFY
Find, Analyse, Amplify

Hashtag Summary Data

Observed

9

Observed Days

Total

177
Total

Tweets

177 Total | 124 Original | 53 Retweet

209.5K
Total

Impressions

209.5K Total | 106.9K Unique

93

Users

Daily

19

Average Daily Tweets

15

Average Daily Users

Trend Analysis: Whole Period

Unique Users

-100   100

-12

Total Impressions

-100   100

-19
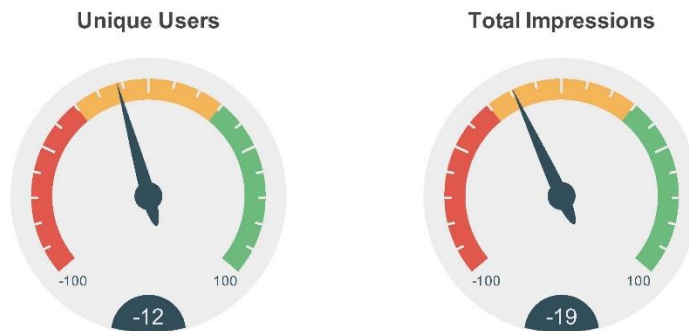
Average Engagement and Sentiment

Engagement

0   100

41

100

Hashtag Amplification Over Time

Hashtag Impressions: Total contribution

Hashtag Tweets: Total contribution

101

Hashtag Users vs Tweets

Hashtag Original Tweets vs Retweets

102

Hashtag Tweets: Days of the week and hours of the day

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	Total
Mon																									
Tue																									
Wed																									
Thu																									
Fri																									
Sat																									
Sun																									
Total																									

Scale   High

Time zone: GMT
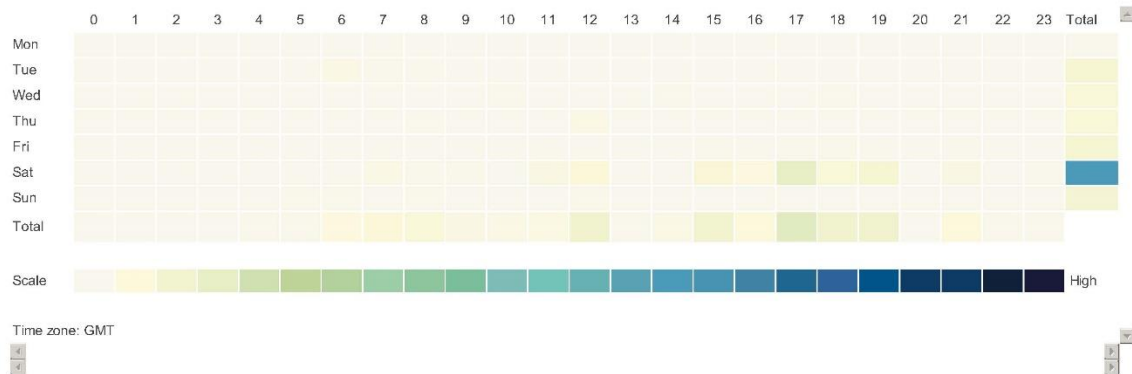
Hashtag Top Influencers

Showing 1 To 10 Of 10 Influencers Found

1. taraskurtu
2. mihaihristea
3. shotemall
4. curaj
5. ingerisidemoni
6. octavpelin
7. olegbrega
8. sandu_lupea
9. mikellyno
10. avrenim50

user influence for this hashtag

user specialization for this hashtag

103
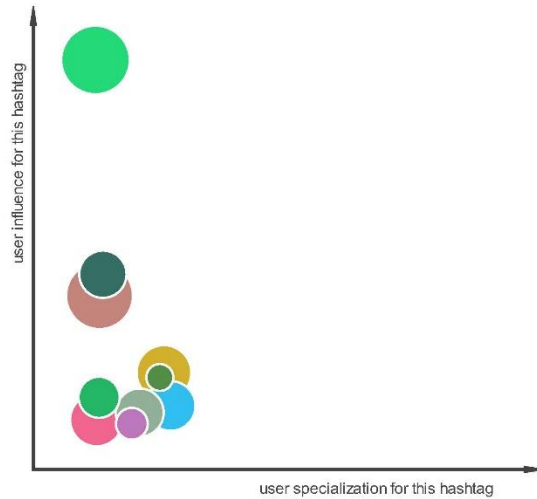
Top Influencer's Details (1 to 10)

Influencer	Followers	Tweets On Tg	Tweets On Tg %	Tweets Off Tg	Retweeted On Tg	Mentioned On Tg	Mentions On Tg by User	Retweets On Tg
taraskurtu	18,262	2	0.5%	381	3	0	0	0
mihaihristea	2,111	9	0.8%	1,092	0	2	0	9
shotemall	15,298	1	0.7%	146	1	0	0	0
curaj	4,481	2	3.9%	49	0	0	0	0
ingerisidemoni	266	4	3.7%	105	7	1	2	0
octavpelin	1,116	2	0.7%	299	4	0	2	1
olegbrega	2,680	1	4.3%	22	2	0	0	0
sandu_lupea	2,275	2	2.5%	77	0	0	4	1
mikellyno	3,748	1	0.6%	176	0	0	0	1
avrenim50	435	2	2.1%	92	3	0	0	1

104

Top Hashtags

Top Related Hashtags (1 to 20)

Hashtag	Tweets	Correlation	Impressions
#bucharest	32	9.67%	182471
#10august	18	5.44%	9737
#romanianprotests	10	3.02%	100303
#romania	10	3.02%	3802
#hastagisti	10	3.02%	454
#diaspora	6	1.81%	1764
#protest	5	1.51%	9904
#dragnia	5	1.51%	4166
#jandarmerie	5	1.51%	1863
#slugipsd	5	1.51%	1863
#judecatorisantajabili	5	1.51%	227
#romanianpr	3	0.91%	7194
#diicot	3	0.91%	1554
#malinbot	3	0.91%	1242
#ziaristii	3	0.91%	576
#procuroriijigodii	3	0.91%	151
#muiepsd	3	0.91%	142
#bucuresti	3	0.91%	13
#communism	2	0.60%	2293
#soros	2	0.60%	2293

Hashtags Cloud

#hastagistii #populist #cainipsd #naturephotography #hope #nextlevel #diasporaacasa #jegpsd #jandarmerie #peacefulprotest #nomore #europe #dems #soros #10august #romanianpr #jeguripsd #slugicuepoleti #diaspora #procuroriijigodii #anticorruption #votantpsd #10august2019 #malinbot #vot #bucharest #protest #oradea #mihaidide #muiepsd #communism #hotii #denisapascu #slugipsd #diicot #tomytomescu #ziaristii #piatavictoriei #semperfi #libertate #hastagisti #romanianprotests #dragnia #romaniatv #demisia #piatavictoriei #semperfi #insist #judecatorisantajabili #findme #javrapsd #semperfidelis #mui3psd #pupincuristpsd #bucuresti #romania #fakenews #againstcorruption #strainatate #muiebot #psd #demonstratie #propagandaditeaza #nature #votstrainatate #alternativadreapta

Keyword Cloud

somaj contribuabililor bani fara serviciu miting ceartă agentul pune bucharest protestul diasporei secret tehnic pedeliste piata grele usr primul gura jigodii „resistence" spre behaie 000 piața muzicantii revoluţi sticle bot victory lupti... pentru da' chris ti'e worman instructor firea arata face lor creatorul marching card lupte victoriei din românia futu intre Ţinta sunt ajungi fost mişcării vedeţi domne timp apărut dau isti pmp pula maicare square punct Şcoala august cum american mişcarea szigfried ceauşescu putini romania banii pnl greu cersetorii mare government naziste macovisti magistraţilor susţine *insist său „magistraţii metallica zdrentaroşilor racolaţi mălin preda

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8.2. Romanian Language

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