

Broadcasters and Hidden Influentials in Online Protest Diffusion

Joint work with
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Person of the Year 2011: The Protester





- The word 'protest' appears in newspapers exponentially more in 2011 than ever before
- Global tipping point for frustration
- SNSs did not cause the movements, but kept them alive
- Technology helped spread "the virus of protest"

Dec 26, 2011

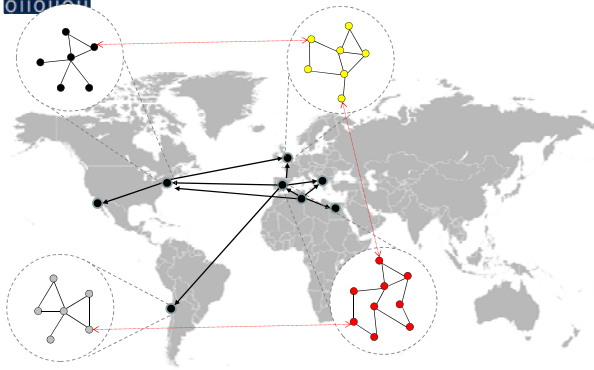





Wave of Protests (2011): Timeline of Events

01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12
January	February	May	July	August	September	December					
Tunisia Algeria Saudi Arabia Egypt Syria Jordan	Yemen Bahrain Libya	Spain Greece Chile	Israel	UK	US	Russia					



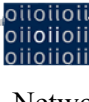
Diffusion and Communication Networks

Models of Diffusion

Innovation, but also other examples with network externalities and information cascades:



- peer-to-peer or media driven? (Coleman et al. 1957 vs van den Bulte et al. 2001)
- contagion, social influence, learning? (Young 2009)
- how do networks shape the process? (Watts 2002; Watts and Dodds 2007)

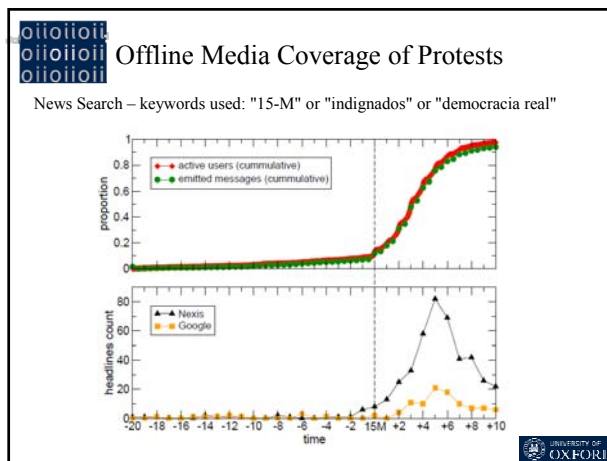
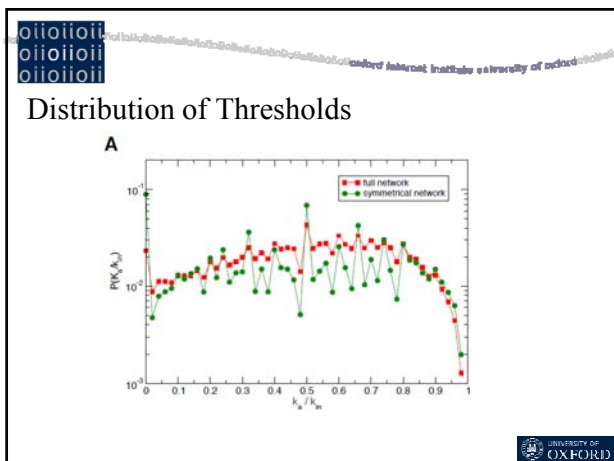
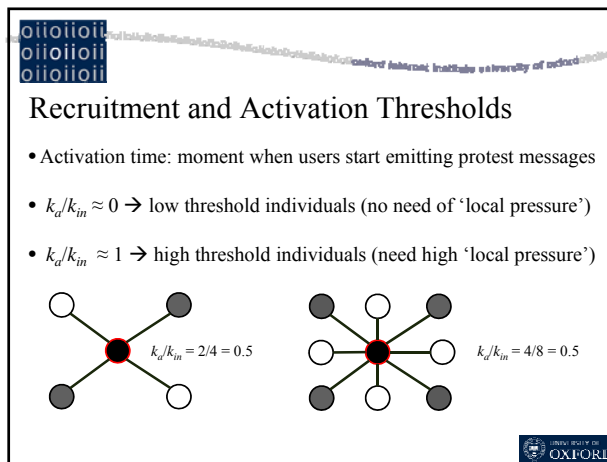
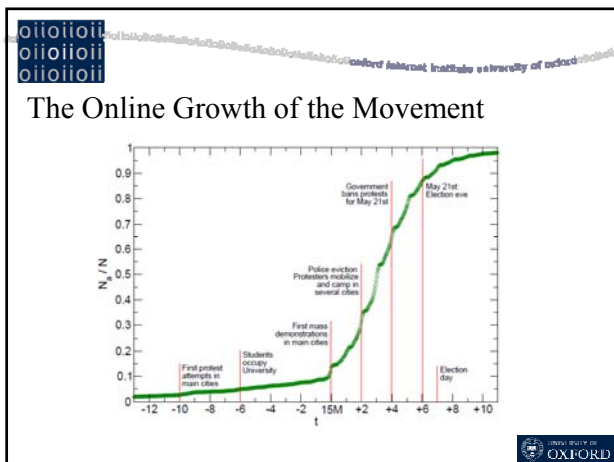
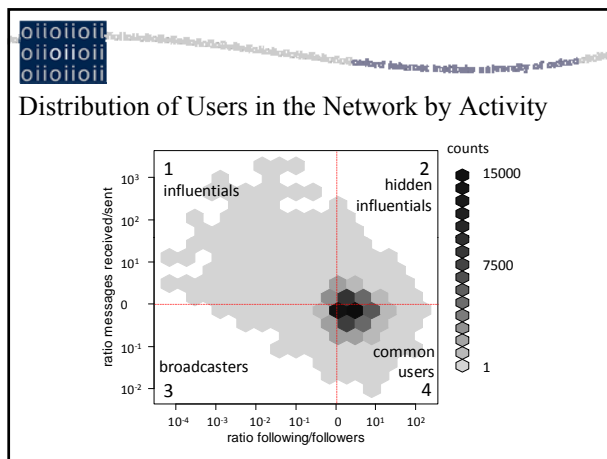
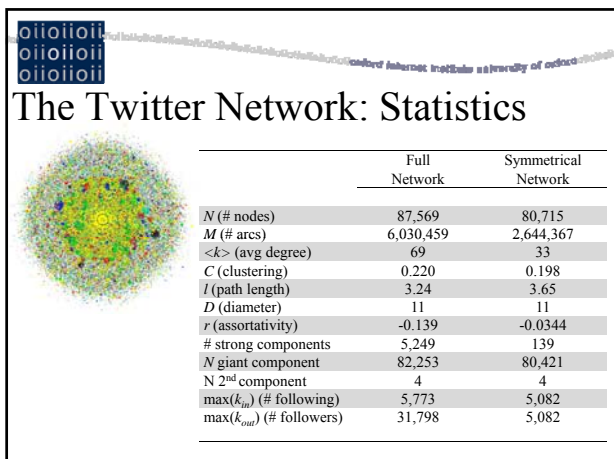




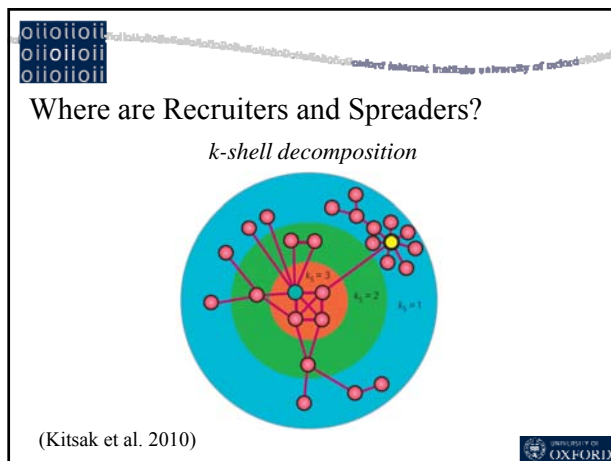
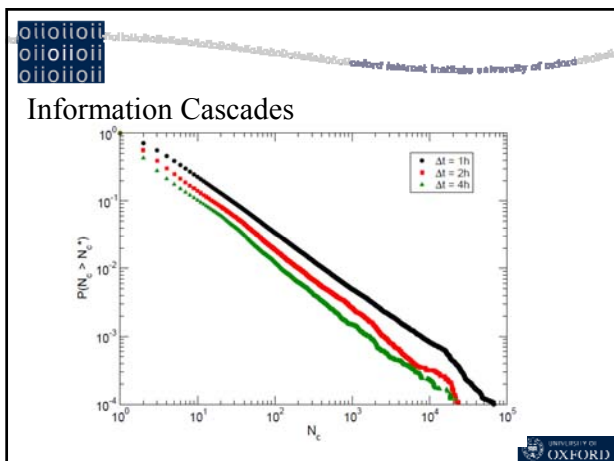
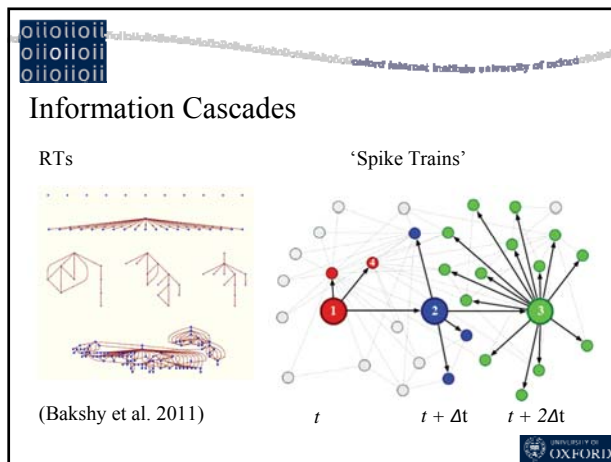
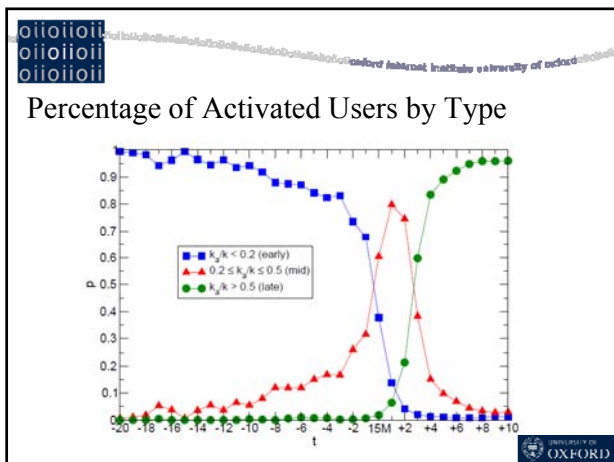
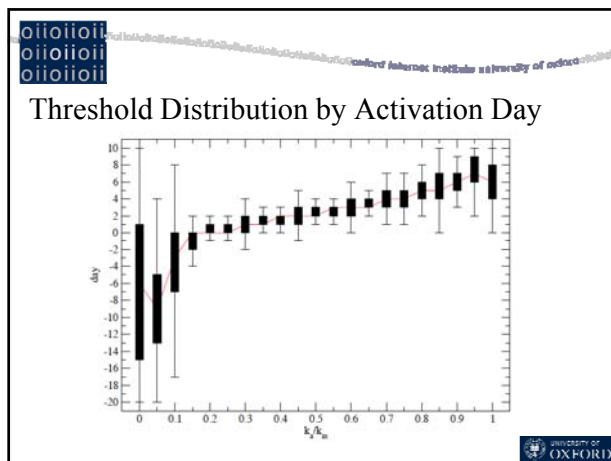
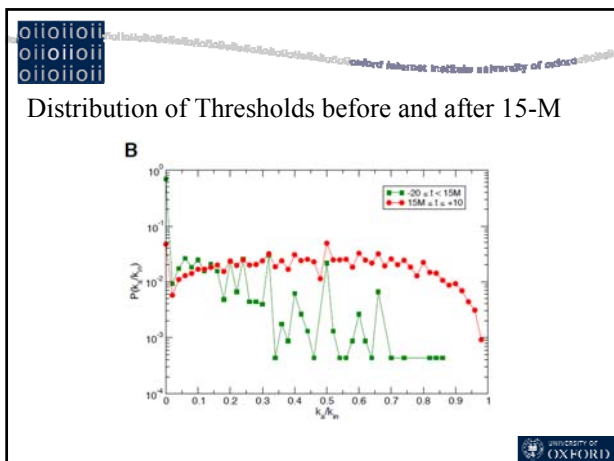
Networks and Collective Action

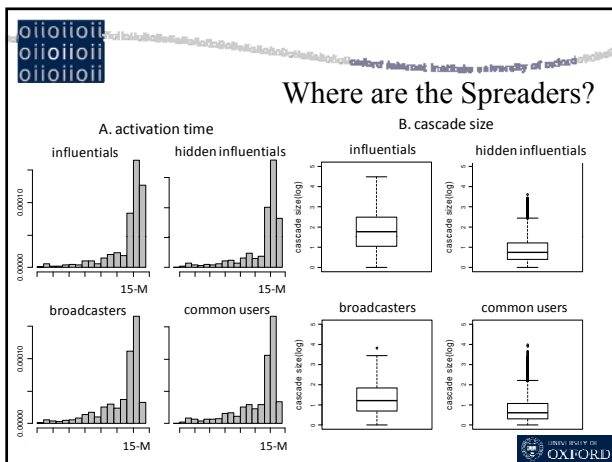
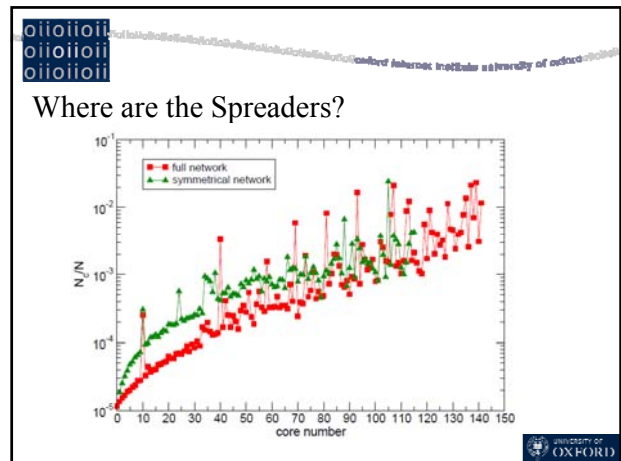
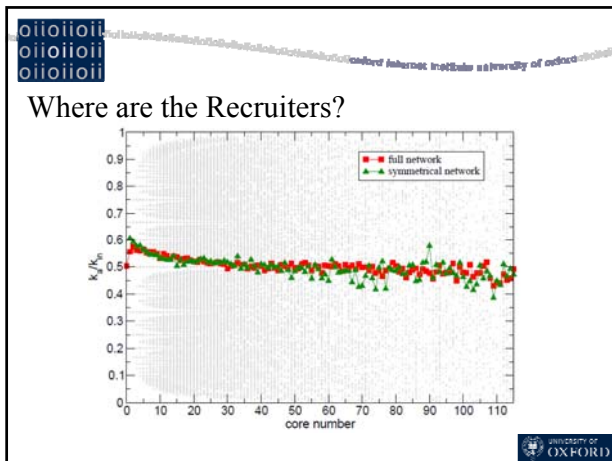
Some historical examples:

- insurgency in Paris commune in 1871 (Gould 1991)
- the 60s civil right struggles in the US (McAdam 1986)
- demonstrations in East Germany (Opp and Gern 1993; Lohman 1994)







Summary of Findings

- feedback between dynamics of recruitment and information diffusion
- being central is crucial for diffusion, not so for recruitment
- exogenous factors create random seeding in the network

The University of Oxford logo is in the bottom right corner.

Discussion

To main limitations:

- we do not control for homophily
- we do not control for exposure to offline media

so we might be overestimating influence

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