



A Case Study

prepared by Andrea Lora, Cecilia Hussinger, Elena Staudinger, Ricarda Sowa

Introduction

Telegram has become a central part of social movement organizing over the last decade (Buehling & Heft, 2023; Fang, 2023; Mateo, 2022). Some recent examples are the Anti-Extradition movement in Hong Kong (2019/2020), anti-election fraud protests in Belarus (2020), the "Querdenken" movement during the COVID-19 pandemic in Germany, among others. Particularly the possibility of creating channels open to virtually anyone and everyone "offer one-to-many communication in which administrators retain authority over their messages' content and visibility" (Buehling & Heft, 2023, p. 3). Indeed, these channels have a broadcasting function, allowing on the one hand to **attract and mobilize people** interested in participating in these movements before and during protests, as well as to provide real-time updates of the most important events (Mateo, 2022). In this case, the objective is to **investigate how and for what purpose Telegram channels** were used during the formation and maintenance of **student protest camps in solidarity with Palestine** earlier this year. In other words, we are asking:

What does the discourse in Telegram channels focus on?

This case is interesting because it intersects the tradition of socially and politically active students and communication technologies as a tool to unify, organise and create community identity (Alfonseca & El-Bawab, 2024).

Data and Research Design

Telegram Channels: TAHRIREncampment (Michigan University),alyudur (non-affiliated Spanish Channel), CanalAcampadaPalestinaUV (Universidad de València), cuadencampment (New York), WOLPalestine (New York), Palestine is Everywhere (New York)

Research Design: Automated Dictionary Approach (words and categories), calculate shares per message, focusing on broader categories

Mixed Method: looking at it qualitative, discourse analysis -> looking at the framing, targeting of the message

Hypotheses

Mobilisation-Hypothesis: Expecting more discourse about mobilising people than infrastructure.

Taking into account that the data is from (broadcasting) channels, where only a few administrator share information, we expect to find more messages about general mobilization; i.e. where and when to go and join, instead of more detailed information about organization and infrastructure.

Organization-Hypothesis: Expecting discourse on how to organize and maintain the camp

We expect to find some discourse about the set up and maintenance of tents, communal kitchens, schedules, among others.

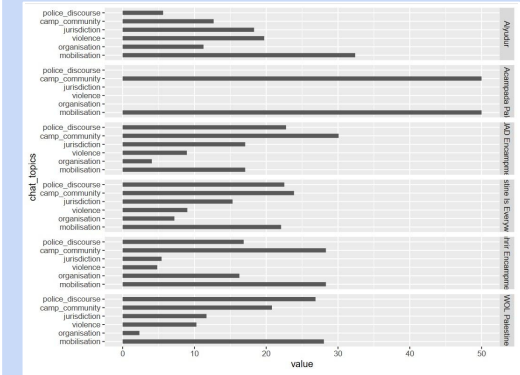
Based on the fact that protesters appear more violent in the public eye when there is a more heavy presence of police, we expect that police discourse is more prevalent in the US channels, in comparison to the channels in Spain.

"(...) the police can play a (...) framing role: protest policing provides cues about the nature of the protest and may thus lead observers to infer information about the violence and intentions of protesters, regardless of their actual behavior." (White, English, and Eckhouse 2024)

Us vs. Them: Activists (use Telegram channels to) try to reclaim the narrative of police vs protester violence.

- What narratives are created regarding protestors vs. police, as observable in the telegram channels?
- What differences in framing exist in Spanish vs. US channels?
- How do protestors perceive and react to police, as observable through communication via the Telegram channels?
- How do protestors prepare for and protect themselves from police violence?

Quantitative Results



Qualitative Results

CUAD Encampment & WOL Palestine (18.04.2024)

!! 🚨 ALERT 🚨 !!

Police equipped with riot gear have entered the encampment and instructed students to disperse. CONTINUE SHOWING UP!

WOL Palestine (18.04.2024)

SHAME ON NYPD!

RUSH TO THE CCNY CAMPUS TO PROTECT THE CUNY ENCAMPMENT NOW STUDENTS, FACULTY and PRESS are being violently attacked by police-students are reporting pepper spray in the eyes and broken teeth.

THE PIGS refused to let a legal observer in the building SHAME!

Activists' Reclamation of the Narrative