Transnational Activism in Support of National Protest: Questions of Identity and Organization

This article considers the question of whether transnational activism supporting national protest attains a cohesive collective identity on social media whilst organizationally remaining localized. It examines a corpus of social media data collected in the course of two months of rolling protests in 2013 against the largest proposed open-cast gold mine at Roşia Montană, Romania, which echoed among Romanian expatriates. A network text analysis of the data supplemented with interview findings revealed concerns with protest logistics as common across the transnational networks of protest localities on both Facebook and Twitter, a finding that testified to the coordinated character of the protests. On the other hand, collective identity emerged as the fruit of attempts to surmount localized protest experiences of geographically disparate but civically-minded social media users.

Key words*: transnational activism, diaspora, protest, activism, social media, identity, organization*

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The present article is an examination of transnational activism orchestrated by Romanian expatriates in support of a succession of environmental protests that took place in the country, in the autumn of 2013. The primary aim of the investigation is to renew the scrutiny of transnational activism by querying the purchase that discursive transactions on social media by globally dispersed groups have on the formation of collective identities and organization (Russell, 2005; Bennett and Segerberg, 2011; Bennett et al., 2014; Mercea and Funk, 2014; Theocharis et al., 2015). To that end, this study ascertains whether transnational activism in support of national protests may attain a cohesive identity on social media whilst organizationally remaining localized.

One of the most effective (Parau, 2009) and storied environmental struggles in Romania (Mercea, 2014), the campaign against a planned cyanide-based gold mine at Roşia Montană grew over the span of more than a decade. Following the fall of authoritarian communism in 1989, environmental concerns occupied a notoriously peripheral place on the public agenda in Romania (Petrova & Tarrow, 2007). Environmentalism had been the preserve of professionalized, policy-orientated non-governmental organizations (Börzel & Buzogany, 2010:718). Contrariwise, the campaign to prevent the development of the gold mine by the Toronto Stock Exchange listed Gabriel Resources was instigated by a small group of local property owners. It successfully litigated a series of planning permits in the Romanian courts (Salvaţi Roşia Montană, 2015) that forestalled the licensing of the mine.

In the autumn of 2013, opposition to the mine reached a high point when concerted street demonstrations erupted in cities around the country and across the world. They lasted for more than two months from September to November 2013. The protests were sparked by a set of amendments to the country's mining law proposed by the Romanian government granting extensive facilities to mine developers[i]. Opponents described the amendments as unconstitutional, in breach of EU norms and a gift to Gabriel Resources (Harosa et al., 2013). They were an outburst of brooding anger fuelled by the perception of unaccountability and corruption of state authorities colluding with commercial mining interests at the expense of the common weal (Wong, 2013) and engrained averseness to cyanide-based mining (Verseck, 2013)[ii]. The demonstrations were unparalleled for the scope of participation they attracted and their duration (Burean & Badescu, 2014). The amendments were rejected by the Romanian Parliament on 10 December 2013 (Nicolae, 2013).

Especially striking about the 2013 protests were the solidarity events staged by Romanians abroad simultaneously with demonstrations in the homeland during the entire duration of the "Romanian Autumn" as the protests were dubbed by the press (Besliu, 2013). In late September, CNN reported that "the Romanian population has organized a global protest movement, taking place in over 60 cities across Romania and the world, ranging from Washington DC to Shanghai" (Besliu,

2013). Attempting to grasp the significance of this show of unity, one is reminded that Eastern European diasporas and particularly those residing in the democratic West have not exhibited an unalloyed appetite for the democratization of their homelands solely by virtue of their exposure to the political culture of their host countries (Koinova, 2009:42). Indeed, the Romanian diaspora displayed little enthusiasm for elections throughout the two decades of transition from authoritarian communism, turning out in modest numbers to legitimate the country's budding democratic edifice with its vote (Burean, 2011:96).

The article provides a network text analysis of transnational activism by Romanian expatriates who protested the amendments to the country's mining law. Borrowing an analytical apparatus from social movement studies, I assay how geographically disparate groups of Romanian expatriates participating in the protests formulated their collective identity and organization on social media. Thereby, I depart from the more well-rehearsed concern with relations between a diaspora and its homeland (Alinejad, 2011; Graziano, 2012; Hickerson, 2013; Kang, 2009). Instead of a close inspection of an organization with a view to establishing how and with what success it championed an activist cause espoused by a diaspora (see Bandele, 2010); or to extricating conditions expeditious or otherwise to the mobilization and upscaling of a transnational protest (Koinova and Karabegović, 2016), the present analysis investigates the relations between activist groups that mobilized in the Romanian diaspora.

In what follows, I explicate the relationship between identity and organization as delineated in studies of social movements and diasporas. I thereafter distil the scholarship on the digital dimension of collective action and transnational activism into three hypotheses for grappling with the 2013 mobilization. To that end and thereafter, a corpus of Facebook and Twitter data is analyzed that was retrieved from 34 Facebook event pages used to publicize the demonstrations in as many places worldwide and over 22 thousand hashtagged tweets collected between September and December 2013.

Conceptual framework

Social movement scholarship and diaspora studies both intimate close interconnections between collective identity and organization. Social movement studies have elaborated on the place of organizations in collective action. Organizations have been canonically regarded as a rational response to obstacles hampering the coalescence of discrete interests into a cooperative effort to secure a collective good (Baldassarri, 2009:394). The premise of this argument is that at a minimum

cost, organization delivers the collective capacity necessary to successfully pursue what are consonant but may otherwise be atomized interests. The definition has further been qualified by critics positing that the "social norms and sanctioning systems" (2009:394) that constitute an organization emerge through social interaction. Organization thus first materializes in the communication among individuals who signal their allied interests, beliefs or traits and their readiness to pursue them together (Bimber, Flanagin & Stohl, 2012:61). It is through communication that a contextually optimal combination of collective identity and self-interest engenders organization.

Casting the analytical gaze back to Charles Tilly's (1978) concept of *catnets* (short for "category networks"), which designates the cognitive construction of social relations among actors who enrol in collective action, one is reminded that identity-building and group development are collective processes intimately tied together. Closer to the present day, through the study of the Occupy Movement, social movement research exposed a horizontal mode of social organization pivoting on participation in the logistics and governance of the physical space and in political decision-making (Rehmann, 2013). Closely linked, the two varieties of participation were made accessible outside the physical confines of Occupy encampments via social media and other applications for networked communication, e.g. video streaming sites (Mercea, 2013). Equally, networked communication connected multiple participant constituencies striving for a collective voice of renewed solidarity whereby to confront third parties like corporations or governments (Rehmann, 2013:5-6). The apparent participation continuum from physical colocation to mobile and networked communication thus appeared conducive to the delineation of both the organizational boundaries and the collective identity of the Occupy Movement (Kavada, 2015:883).

The same social movement literature alludes to the collective identity of social movement actors as being in flux (Gerbaudo and Treré, 2015). Amidst heated deliberations in the wake of the Arab Spring, one line of enquiry into the application of social media to collective action has pursued the question of social identity formation (McGarthy et al., 2014). The latter authors retrieved the notion of *opinion-based groups* to propose that an agreement on who was a common opponent (the out-group) constituted a social identity[iii] acting as the foundation uniting people in protest who otherwise may not "share their race, nationality, ethnicity or gender" (2014:729). That common understanding gained a vital momentum on social media at the outset of the uprisings (McGarthy et al., 2014).

This is but one in a series of multiple instances of collective action where instead of being fundamentally reduced to a sense of attachment to a group, collective identity may be premised on a fellowship of shared aspirations or experience (McDonald, 2002; Verhulst and Walgrave, 2009).

Contrariwise, it has been suggested that publicizing personalized avowals of affinity to rights, values or experiences undergirding collective action on social media may not amount to more than tokenistic identity performance. In this account, individuals aggregated through a head-count on social media no longer partake in the fraught process of negotiating common aims, strategies, a mutual recognition or the reciprocity distilled into a 'collective we' of erstwhile collective identity (Milan, 2015:896).

Whilst the latter may be a preoccupation that primarily bedevils activists (Bobel, 2007), research into opinion-based groups foregrounded the *content* of a social identity when enquiring how collective outcomes such as the mobilization in mass protests of large sections of people transpires who may neither regard themselves as activists nor define themselves as members of a definite social category—e.g. ethnic or national—for the purpose of their participation in collective action (Bliuc et al., 2007:20). Mobilization in social movements thus emerges as an upshot of social validation of personal assessments of "the way things should be" (Smith et al., 2015:544). The latter are personal conceptions of "injunctive norms" that feed into a fresh social identity negotiated, sanctioned or simply endorsed through social interaction (Smith et al., 2015:544). Thus, it is through social interaction that social identity is formed which in turn can be intensified by rather than being entirely confined to a siloed domain of social media (McGarthy et al., 2014:737).

Similarly, diasporas materialize around "an imagination of identity" that is not presumed but constructed and disputed (Sökefeld, 2006:267). In their study of the transformation of contemporary state actors in international relations, Adamson and Demetrou (2007:491) characterize diasporas as "deteritorialized and network-based collective identities" that embody distinct "organizational and spatial logics". A diaspora encompasses collective actors dispersed across national borders who erect an "organizational framework and transnational links" that support membership cohesion premised on a shared national, cultural or religious identity; its interest representation and a connection with "a real or imagined homeland" (2007:497). Diasporas may assemble as networks of organizations and relationships articulated around a transnational identity open even to groups who "have not conceived of themselves explicitly as constituting a diaspora" and act as a vehicle for collective political action (Adamson and Demetrou, 2007:491). In turn, Koinova and Karabegović (2016) propose that diasporas can function as a lynchpin in transnational movements, playing an active part in their initiation and sustainment. They evince transnational activism as a variation of collective action that leverages cognitive, social or material resources to multiply advance a cause at levels of governance—local, national or international—where political opportunities are most ripe (2016:15). Diasporas can be instrumental to relaying such resources to best exploit those opportunities.

For collective actors to crystallize in the diaspora and take collective action on public matters touching on their group entitlements or governance in their host or homelands, a common ethnicity may not be sufficient or even entirely necessary (Wheeler, 2004). However, Ong (2003) distinguished a resilient essentialist "global ethnicity" among the Chinese *translocal publics* who mobilized online to protest against the discrimination of fellow nationals in Indonesia, in the wake of the 1997 Asian financial crisis. Translocal publics were "overlapping networks that cut across borders" bringing together co-ethnic groups (Ong, 2003: 87) around shared issues. Ethnicity, she contended, endures as a common identity denominator for otherwise assorted political constituencies. This may be the case especially when ethnicity is instrumentally conflated with a shared opinion so as to help protestors explicate their chosen course of political action (Bliuc et al, 2012:2178). Ong (2003:98) further argued that whist it was imperative to recognize the presence of ethnic overtones, it was notable that Chinese diasporic groups successfully resorted to a dedicated website (Global Huaren) to press civic demands for accountability on a national government.

Recent evidence on the organization of collective action with social media, on the other hand, may appear inconclusive. First, Theocharis and his colleagues (2015:8) point to the conspicuous marginality of organizational talk in the Twitter communication streams associated with the Aganatiksmenoi (Greece), Indignados (Spain) and the US Occupy Movement. This, they assert, held true for both the orchestration of political actions (e.g. the planning of street protests) and the coordination of onsite protest logistics. The latter was a slightly more frequent activity accounting for 9 percent of the tweets that they surveyed as opposed to 7 percent dedicated to political actions. The findings nonetheless corroborate with a study of the transnational Occupy Movement evincing communication about protest logistics on Twitter to have preceded and informed on-site action (Bastos et al., 2015). Indeed, cognate research has found that both on Twitter and on Facebook, communication pertaining to protest logistics was especially robust (Mercea and Funk, 2014).

The latter authors showed the discourse relating to the coordination of action resources to be consistent and proportionate across both platforms. They further uncovered that especially communication on Facebook groups reinforced the collective identities of protest groups (2014:21). Yet, in another albeit geo-spatial investigation into the Twitter communication associated with the US Occupy Movement, a pattern of localized activity was uncovered that was dedicated to protest logistics and the marshalling of tangible resources necessary to enact collective action (Conover, 2013b). Such localized activity stood in contrast with the circulation of identity frames such as "We are the 99%" which was nation-wide in scope (Conover et al., 2013a). Indeed, it was suggested that social media were embraced by the Occupy Movement for the rapid, scalable although ultimately transient aggregation of masses of individual actors (Juris, 2012:260). Nonetheless, contextual

factors such as entrenched geodemographic divisions in a country as well as the political and socio-economic prominence of a protest locality (ranging from socio-economic centres to remote rural areas, Bastos et al., 2014) circumscribe the use of social media in a protest.

In light of these contentions, it was hypothesized that in the transnational mobilization against the proposed amendments to the Romanian mining law, organizational talk pivoted on concerns with protest logistics (H1a), on both Facebook and Twitter (H1b). Conversely, as the protests were a direct challenge to the Romanian government, collective identity was expressed in homologous (H2a), principally civic, terms across localities in the diaspora (H2b). Moreover, it was posited that collective identity concepts aided in bridging the loose social organization of translocal publics undertaking collective action, standing in contrast to the localized concerns with site-specific protest logistics (H3).

Research Methods

The general approach to the textual data garnered for this analysis was *instrumental* as proposed by Roberts (2000:262). Accordingly, the text under scrutiny was interpreted in light of a theory already held by the researcher. The possible entwinement of locality with identity and the organization of transnational activism by members of the Romanian diaspora on social media was probed through a network text analysis (Diesner and Carley, 2005). In network text analysis, texts are maps of words; words or phrases are abstracted as concepts as long as they pertain to a single idea. Network text analysis is predicated on the notion that language is a representation of interrelations among concepts (Carley, 1997:79) that may, inter alia, expose the nexus of social and discursive relations in a text.

For the analysis, the textual data was aggregated into two discrete—Facebook and Twitter—corpora. The Twitter data was gathered by querying the Search Application Programming Interface (API) for posts bearing the 7 main hashtags utilized in the protests[iv]. The hashtags were identified through a key word search followed by the retrieval of hashtag streams and their close monitoring for the entire duration of the protests. This approach was made possible by the fact that the Twitter Search API returns results that are up to seven days old (Burgess and Bruns, 2012). It thus allows for historical queries whenever data collection does not coincide with the very moment a hashtag goes into use[v]. The resultant dataset comprised 22k tweets. The Facebook event pages were indexed in real-time on the official website of the "Save Roşia Montană" campaign. Diasporic activist groups were invited by the campaign to register their Facebook-advertised events with it. Textual data from

34 groups were collected and manually archived for analysis. In the following step, each individual corpus was sorted, formatted and finally cleaned with the AutoMap text mining tool.

In the course of the cleaning operation, a delete list was created for each corpus comprising "noise words" such as conjunctions or articles (Carley et al., 2013:269). To tackle the research hypotheses, I generated separate Facebook and Twitter semantic networks in the DyNetML format which included both in and out-links or edges among concepts. I subsequently analyzed the network with the sister package ORA. ORA is designed for the analysis and visualization of semantic network data (Carley et al., 2013). The Twitter semantic network had 12,488 nodes and 53,594 edges; the Facebook network had 21,038 nodes and 155,170 edges. I performed a number of complexity reduction operations on the data whereby, first, all isolated nodes were removed from the analysis. Subsequently, I retrieved the concepts in the data corpora pertaining to protest locales (e.g. London, Berlin) from outside Romania. This method for pinpointing protest localities was viewed as more reliable than the geocode information attached to social media data (Bastos et al., 2014); and, crucially, it was in line with the aim to probe associative frames connecting location with identity and organizational concepts.

I produced two discrete Facebook and Twitter locality networks on which I performed the analysis. I examined the locality networks both qualitatively and quantitatively. The qualitative component of the analysis involved a close reading of the data in order to classify identity and organizational concepts. This was done through inductive and iterative concept coding at text level with cognizance that the process may result in the cross-classification of some concepts (potentially interchangeably designating both identity and organization; Diesner and Carley, 2005). Quantitatively, I compared measures of degree centralization of the Facebook and Twitter networks. Earlier network studies of collective action have proposed that degree-centralized networks are particularly well-suited for communication and organization as key nodes can broker ties with all other nodes in the network (Oliver and Marwell, 1993). Accordingly, expecting that identities and organizational concepts may bear differently on the connectivity of the locality network (H3), I ascertained whether one or several concepts helped bridge the diasporic locality networks by measuring their *betweenness* centrality, or how often a node rests between two other nodes that are not directly connected to each other (Prell, 2012:104). Secondly, in ORA, I measured in-degree centrality to ascertain the *evokability* of identity and organizational concepts. In this study, *evokability* is the degree to which concepts link into a focal or measured concept (Carley, 1997:85)[vi], or the interest that the latter receives. The expected outcome of the combined qualitative and quantitative analyses was a set of associative frames or "patterns of relations between concepts" which have network attributes (e.g. centrality) but no set meaning (Atteveldt, 2008:70).

Finally, I contextualize the ensuing findings with interview data. In the summer of 2014, I attended a meeting called by members of the "Save Roşia Montană" campaign with representatives of groups who had staged the protests abroad[vii]. Twelve representatives and campaign members in turn narrated the experiences that had marked their participation in the protests. The testimonies made during the meeting amounted to a set of ethnographic interviews (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). This second qualitative component of the analysis allowed for methodological triangulation and, thereby, a qualitative validation of the quantitative results (Lindgren and Lundström, 2011). In the process of indexing the accounts by the group representatives, I designed a pattern-matching protocol (Yin, 1994) whereby to distinguish similarities and differences in the articulation of collective identity and organization among the diasporic groups that took part in the protests.

Results

Excluding protest sites in Romania, there were 58 worldwide locations referenced with the Roşia Montană protest hashtags on Twitter. The scaled betweenness score for the transnational locality network was .687 suggesting an important concentration of ties around a number of cardinal nodes. The main protest hashtags acted as bridges between the various localities, having the highest betweenness centrality among concepts in the locality network (see Bar Chart 1 and Figure 1). The hashatags were thus a means to record the geographical span of the protests.

Bar Chart 1 here

The next step was to examine more closely the links between the protest localities and the concepts that connected them. The most cited ten locations in descending order were London, Skouries (Greece), Toronto, Paris, Berlin, Montreal, Dublin, Prague, Rome and Amsterdam. At the opposite end were Brussels, the Vatican, Aarhus, Ljubljana, Stuttgart and Montpellier with no more than 6 mentions. Most locations were either capital cities or important urban centres. The two notable exceptions of Kremnica (Slovakia) and Skouris (Greece) were gold-mining development sites where opposition groups had standing ties with the Roşia Montană activists in Romania.

Figure 1 here

Apart from one cross-reference between Paris and London there was no evidence of direct links among the protest sites in the transnational locality network. Upon closer inspection, the Twitter accounts *rosiamontanaint*, *alburnusmaior* and *lumif9* which had some of the highest

betweeness centrality scores in the locality network (see Chart 1), connecting to 16, 9 and 25 of the principal protest locations in the diaspora (see also Figure 1). If the first of these accounts was operated by a self-declared "international group founded in Brussels to facilitate coordination and communications between all groups and individuals fighting to protect Roşia Montană", the latter two were the official accounts of the leading non-governmental organization in the Save Roşia Montană campaign and the personal account of a leading member of the campaign, respectively. Thus, rather than being an entirely horizontal structure, the links between the various protest sites worldwide seemed to be indirect, being centralized through the three Twitter accounts. The prominence of the two accounts associated with the campaign suggested that key actors in the Save Roşia Montană campaign were likewise brokers in the Twitter network connecting the transnational protest localities.

Hashtags, on the other hand, were a discursive device acting as synecdoches for collective identity. Whilst unsurprisingly the principal vehicle for connecting localities, hashtags revealed a choice of concepts that underpinned an identity premised on solidarity with Roşia Montană. All but one of the protest hashtags ("#unitisalvam") incorporated a direct reference to Roşia Montană[viii]. Moreover, hashtags were key brokering concepts in the transnational locality network that often co-occurred. The most frequently used hashtag, #rosiamontana (see Table 1), appeared more than half of the times (n=13,174) together with the #unitisalvam hashtag. The same hashtag occurred more than 95% of the times together with "#saverosiamontana"; alongside "#salvatirosiamontana" (91% of occurrences) and, finally, featured in 38% of the posts containing the #weloverosia" hashtag.

The dominant identity concepts connecting the locality network portrayed the protests as a display of resistance to cyanide-based gold mining (see Table 1)[ix]. "Europe", one of the frequently occurring identity concepts, educed a transnational dimension to the protests which, nonetheless, were not devoid of an ethnic character. The chief ethnic identity marker was the adjective "Romanian" (see Table 1). Whereas in terms of frequency and network centrality, ethnicity did not have a dominant position among the concepts contributing to an associative identity frame, it nonetheless was a more significant attribute of the protests than their European or transnational dimension. Lastly, two concepts— "Gabriel" and "parliament"— designated the out-group or the contenders who have divergent interests (Tilly, 1978:56) from the protestors, thereby evidencing that the associative frame indeed pertained to an opinion-based social identity.

Table 1 here

In sum, the observed links between the principal identity concepts pointed to an associative collective identity frame that primarily publicized the civic and contentious (i.e. opposing cyanide-

based gold mining) character of the protests. In certain localities, the preeminent identity concepts were accompanied by other terms that helped expand collective identity. Illustratively, "green" and "global" were two concepts associated with the London protests; "corruption" and "environment" were concepts attached to the Paris mobilizations (the latter also to Montreal). In other words, whilst key building blocks of the collective identity were shared across protest sites thus verifying H2a, this was an identity predicated on a combination of hashtags and principally civic rather than ethnic concepts. The latter finding confirmed H2b. The communication orchestrated by the *rosiamontanaint, alburnusmaior* and *lumif9* accounts fed into the same collective identity frame (see Figure 1).

Table 2 here

Relative to identity concepts, organizational concepts had lower betweenness (Spearman's r_s =-718, p<.006) and in-degree centrality scores (Spearman's r_s=-418, n.s.). They were thus less instrumental to connecting the locality network together, whilst garnering less attention than identity concepts. Organizational concepts reflected preoccupations as diverse as the weather in a protest locality; exchanges about landmark sites chosen for the weekly protests, (e.g. the Houses of Parliament in London, the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, the downtown area of Toronto) or the type of actions planned (London flash-mobs or candlelit vigils, demonstrations in Paris, petitions to the Canadian government). Importantly, corroborating H1a, the ego-networks of prominent protest localities on Twitter displayed many logistical concepts. However, tweets about more minor localities appeared to be hashtagged notices signalling that an event either had or would be taking place there.

A concern that nevertheless received an important amount of interest across the diasporic locality network was that of chronicling the protests with photos and footage. The image and video narration of the protests fed into the overarching desire to portray a cohesive collective identity, suggesting that identity and organization fed into each other. As the Vienna group representative recalled, the group embraced an inclusive identity both on social media and during the street protests so as to enable the social organization of the protests by people who had not previously met or were not already sympathetic to the cause. As she explained,

> …what I really liked about our activities was that we removed any type of nationalism or Romanian identity and we made the protests open to all. We wrote all our slogans in English, in German so that the public in Vienna or the guests from Vienna would not feel vexed by a local problem… this is one of the reasons why we got a lot of support from NGOs in Vienna.

On Facebook, the scaled betweenness score for the diasporic locality network was .150 which was significantly lower than on Twitter. Among the first ten concepts with the highest betweenness centrality were six protest localities from the diaspora (see Bar Chart 2). Further dissimilarities with Twitter were the higher betweenness centrality of locality concepts. Berlin rather than London was by far the most central diasporic protest hub on Facebook. Indeed, the direct textual links among protest localities were far more visible. The first six cities with the highest betweenness centrality connected to 27 other localities excluding self-loops, the connection of a node to itself.

Bar Chart 2 here

Communication about the protest localities thus seemed to be predicated on more direct interconnections between them on Facebook (see Figure 2). Indeed, both representatives of the transnational groups and the Roşia Montană campaign in Romania avowed that Facebook was the most widely used social media during the 2013 autumn protests. Whilst none of the group representatives spoke of Twitter as having figured in their communication strategies, they recounted establishing connections among disparate localities through Facebook. For instance, following an incident between demonstrators and the police in Brussels which was streamed online, the Hannover representative got in touch with another compatriot who was calling for a demonstration in Hamburg on Facebook. They traded insights on Facebook on how to interact with law enforcement. Feeling reassured, the Hannover representative decide to go ahead and stage a protest in solidarity with Roşia Montană.

Figure 2 here

The identity concepts encountered on Facebook and Twitter were comparable. The most recurrent such concepts expressed a vocal opposition to cyanide-based gold mining (see Table 3). The stem “gold” was a placeholder for both the precious metal and the mining developer at Roşia Montană, Gold Corporation or “Gabriel”. The same was true of the concept “exploitation”, a synonym for mining and/or the proposed gold mine which was used in Romanian. Ethnic identity referents (derived from the stem ‘rom’, ‘rum’) were directly associated with only three protest localities from the diaspora (Budapest, Bonn and Brno). The other identity tropes which reinforced a civic rather than ethnic collective identity are listed in Table 3.

Table 3 here

On Facebook, there was a more explicit social identity binary representing the Roşia Montană protests as the in-group; and conversely, naming the Romanian Parliament, its special committee established to consider the amendments to the mining law and the mining company as the rival out-group. This dichotomous associative identity frame circulated on the Facebook groups of some of the most prominent localities in the transnational locality network, namely Berlin, London and Amsterdam, alongside the dominant frame of opposition to cyanide mining expressed with the concepts "against" and "cyanide". Likewise, the term activist was not employed self-referentially on the event page. Rather, it was an attribute reserved to members of established groups or organizations. There was a shared interest on the Facebook groups to cite such activist entities who had either nominally backed the autumn protests or were called upon to support them, as was the case of Greenpeace international detailed below.

The organizational concepts, on the other hand, reflected a foremost preoccupation with protest logistics. Organizational terms received far fewer in-links than identity concepts (Spearman's r_s =-253, n.s.) suggesting that, although at a non-significant level, their evokability was lower. However, the betweenness centrality of organizational terms was higher than that of identity concepts (Spearman's rho=-123, n.s.), meaning that rather than garnering a lot of attention, organizational terms helped link together concepts, including protest localities. Illustratively, the terms "action", "authorization", "location" or "embassy" which appeared in conversations about the choice of protest sites and the question of whether to register a protest event with local authorities had comparatively higher betweenness centrality than the documented identity concepts. A kindred logistical concern among the diaspora was with turnout evidenced in the recurrent use of the concepts "gather", "join" and "event" and their high betweenness centrality. It was accompanied by information on the scheduling of the protest events (on Sundays).

From among the logistical concepts, the term embassy pertained to political action directed specifically at the Romanian state. The concept had a higher betweenness centrality than all other identity concepts, suggesting there was a marked interest among the diasporic groups on Facebook in the orchestration of protests overtly against the Romanian state. "Greenpeace" was another prominent example of a concept evincing political action that had a higher betweenness score than the identity concepts on Facebook. The environmental organization was cited either for the active role it played in lobbying against the law proposal in Romania or as the target of efforts to build a "green" coalition around the protests abroad.

At the same time, many people shared photos and information on the protests which although not necessarily raising much interest as a topic, documented the protest actions across the diaspora. Moreover, a proposal began to be circulated on the Facebook groups of the diaspora in October

2013 asking members to take group pictures behind a banner featuring one or more words that would be collated into a message of solidarity with Roşia Montană. The idea, captured with the concept "banner" occupied a significant place in the communication on the Facebook groups. Indeed, it was the clearest illustration of a drive among the diaspora to undertake concerted political action, as detailed by the representative of the group in Paris:

> Seeing the scale of the protests globally, the fact that there were so many protests going on in various cities the world over we thought we should put together a common [Facebook] group with a few representatives… [to] design a common action that represents all of us and at the same time unites us all...[here] you can see the photo with the banner we did.

Ultimately, whilst identity concepts were evoked in tandem with protest localities, organizational concepts were more important to bridging the locality network on Facebook. There were, nonetheless, exceptions to this prevailing relationship between identity and organizational concepts exemplified by the betweenness scores of the identity terms "activist", "community" and "against". It consequently appeared that whereas H3 was not verified in the case of Facebook, H2a, b had been validated. H1a was only partly supported by the evidence which revealed that at least two organizational concepts reflected attempts at concerted political action. However, as the London representative implied, the particularly prominent concern with the orchestration of the protests flowed from the goal to maintain their appeal during the two-month period when they continued to be staged:

> …our objective was that each protest should bring something new, to run with a different topic or a different singular activity for it to be interesting for the Romanians and others who took part in the protests.

Table 4 here

In a final test of the third hypothesis, I ran a non-parametric Mann-Whithney U test to compare the centrality measures for the two types of concepts. There was a statistically significant difference in the in-degree centrality of identity and organizational concepts ($U=313.5$, $p<.004$) but not in their betweenness centrality. Identity concepts were more systematically conjured by the observed translocal public than organizational concepts on both Twitter and Facebook. The result held true, albeit to a lesser extent, even when discounting the Twitter hashtags from the analysis

(U=313.5, p<.029). However, identity concepts did not appear to help bridge localities in a more robust manner than organizational concepts. Consequently, whilst on both social media identity was evoked more consistently than organization, civic identity concepts seemed to help bridge localities on Twitter (see Tables 1 and 3) and to a lesser degree on Facebook where organizational concepts displayed a higher betweenness.

Discussion and conclusions

At the heart of the transnational locality network lay the most important political and socio-economic urban centres in Europe and North America. The substantiation of H1 indicated that in the case of simultaneous protests spanning a geographically dispersed transnational network, concerns with protest logistics dominated communication exchanges regarding organization on both Facebook and Twitter (cf. Theocraris et al., 2015). However, three important qualifications apply. First, on Facebook, the high betweenness centrality of the organizational concepts suggested that an organizational frame explicating the choreography of the protests occupied an important place in the communication among the diasporic groups. Second, whilst locational tweets comprised terms that pertained to protest logistics, the same tweets very rarely cited other protest sites either in the diaspora or in Romania. This finding echoed the argument that on Twitter protest logistics may remain a topic of local concern (Conover et al., 2013b). Nonetheless, on Facebook, the communication of the choice to protest in front of Romanian embassies together with the exchanges about organizations such as Greenpeace called upon to support the protests were interpreted as evidence of attempts at coordinated political action.

The same was true of the solidarity banner. In addition, the evidenced preoccupation with the chronicling of the protests both on Twitter and on Facebook testified to the intertwinement of organization and identity. The visual documentation of the events was done with the objective to articulate a coherent collective identity disseminated expediently on social media and beyond. Especially the solidarity banner was illustrative of a notion that the performance of collective identity necessitated systematic organizational coordination. Coordination fulfilled a strategic aim to paint a cohesive transnational network united against the proposed gold mine at Roşia Montană. In the expression of its collective identity, the diaspora appeared to seek to overcome a narrow portrayal of localized experience told by individual social media users. Instead, diasporic groups and especially their representatives, actively and over time built on their social identity to create the collective albeit geographically dispersed *we* (cf. Milan, 2015: 896).

The characterisation of the protests as a stand against cyanide-based gold mining resonated on both Facebook and Twitter. Likewise, common was the social identity premised on the differentiation of an out-group consisting of the mining operator and the Romanian Parliament which together represented an adversary against which to rally as an in-group. Contrastingly, ethnic inflections were particularly subdued on Facebook, the medium of choice for the diasporic groups. On Twitter, ethnicity was an attribute attached to the protests that was nevertheless more peripheral than civic concepts in the depiction of the protests. Importantly, however, whilst identity concepts were more systematically evoked by the observed translocal public than organizational concepts, they did not bridge localities to statistically significant levels either on Twitter or on Facebook.

The finding that on Facebook organizational concepts were more pivotal to the connections between the protest locations intimated that the visibility of the protests on social media helped display the coordinated character of the collective action rather than the collective identity (cf. Milan, 2015) of the loosely organized groups in the transnational network. Facebook—and to a lesser extent Twitter—proved to be an instrument for exhibiting a group's logistical arrangements and for achieving coordination in the absence of other organizational infrastructures (Mercea and Funk, 2014) such as the physical assemblies of the Occupy Movement. These findings about protests staged by diasporic groups targeting their homeland and not a host country government (cf. Ong, 2003) suggest that rather than being a prerequisite to transnational activism essentialist global ethnicities may be conjured up strategically. This possibility and the relationship exposed between social and collective identity invite further longitudinal investigations into the use of social media in transnational activism by diasporic groups.

As with other contemporary mobilizations, the documented protests were faced with the demanding task of forming *catnets* where pre-existing and transnational organizational networks were missing. Social media were an arena where this work could be conducted with variable intensity across protest localities. The study points to dissimilar patterns of identity and social organization on Facebook and Twitter. Perhaps most significantly, the research evidenced how localities were semantically linked together either through shared organizational concerns or through a focus on the defining aspects of the protests. To further distil these insights, other empirical enquiries might find it fruitful to combine them with a study of participant experience of the networked communication of protests. Facebook's Edgerank algorithm, for instance, rank-orders the content in user newsfeeds to match it with previously expressed interests (Skeggs and Yuill, 2016:389). This structural attribute of Facebook introduces a filter outside the control of even the keenest supporter of a protest who follows its public Facebook page. Followers of the same pages

may therefore develop varying perceptions of whether, for example, a possibility to enrol in collective action revolves on a strong attachment to an ethnic, a civic identity or a combination thereof.

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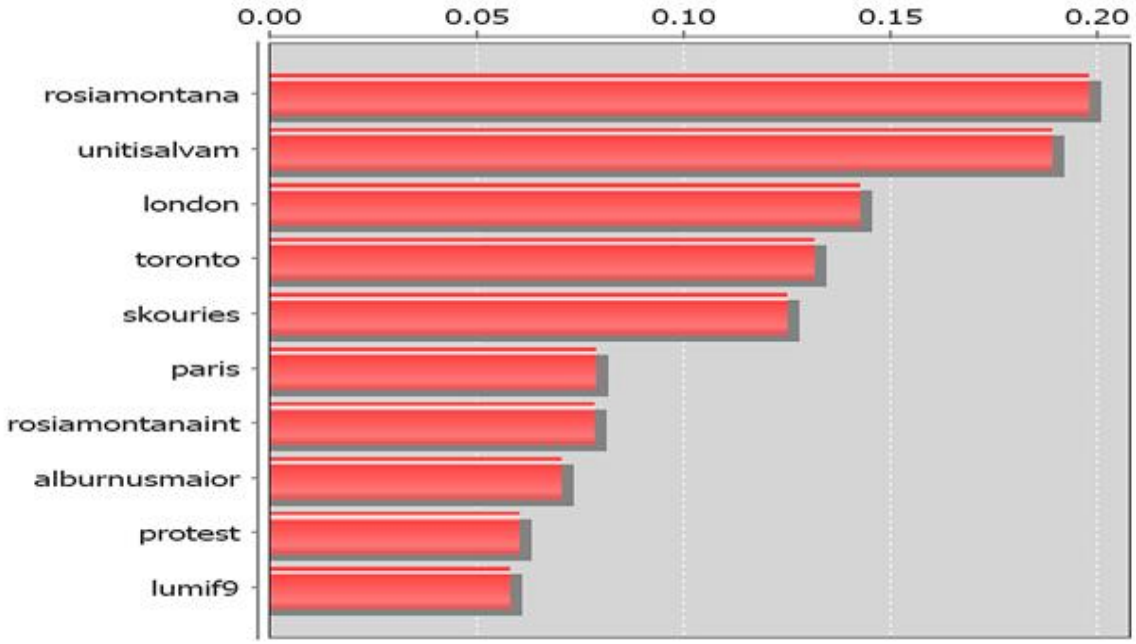
Bar Chart 1: Scaled betweenness centrality for the top ten concepts in the diasporic locality network on Twitter



Bar Chart 2: Scaled betweenness centrality for the top ten concepts in the diasporic locality network on Facebook

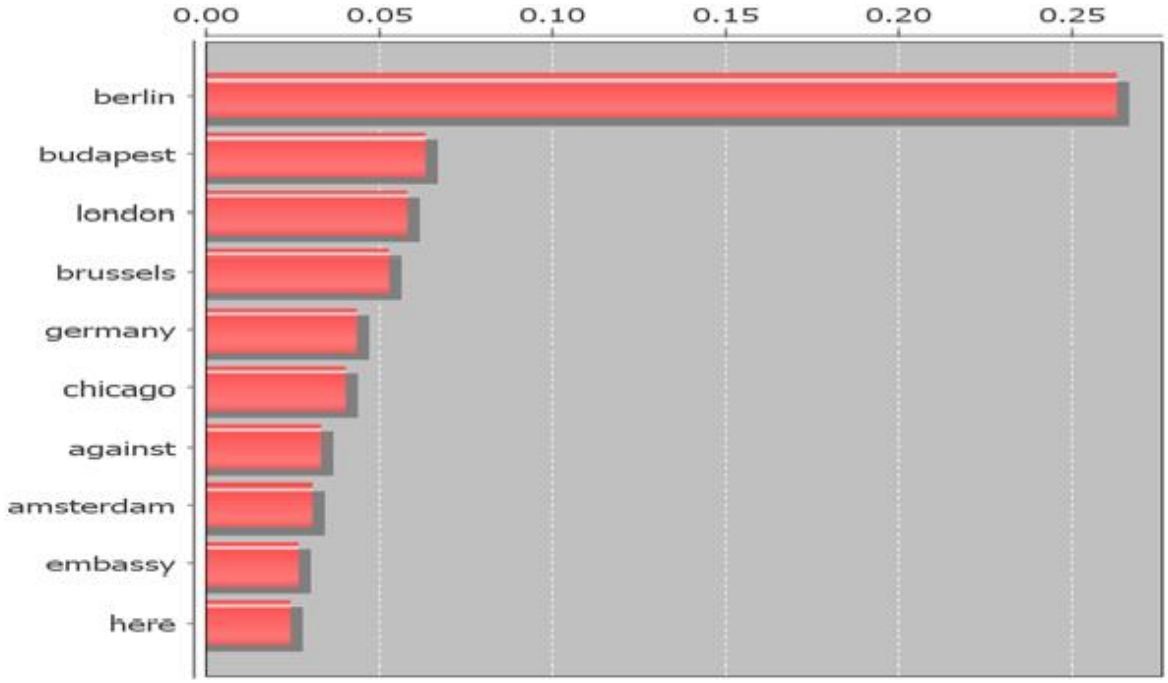


Figure 1: Heat map visualization of betweenness centrality in the Twitter transnational locality network (centrality node and edge size and color gradient from dark blue to intense red)

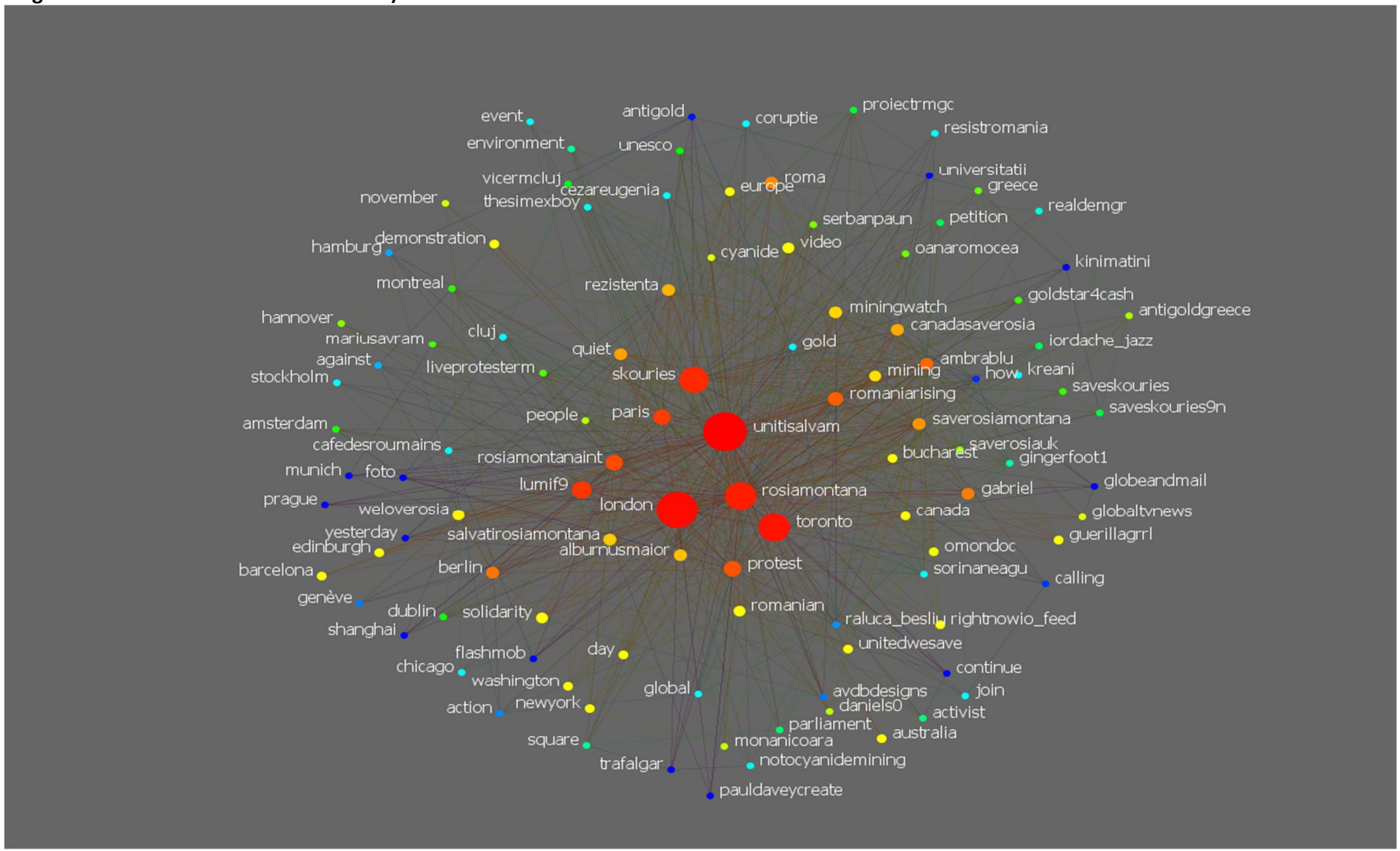


Figure 2: Heat map visualization of betweenness centrality in the Facebook transnational locality network

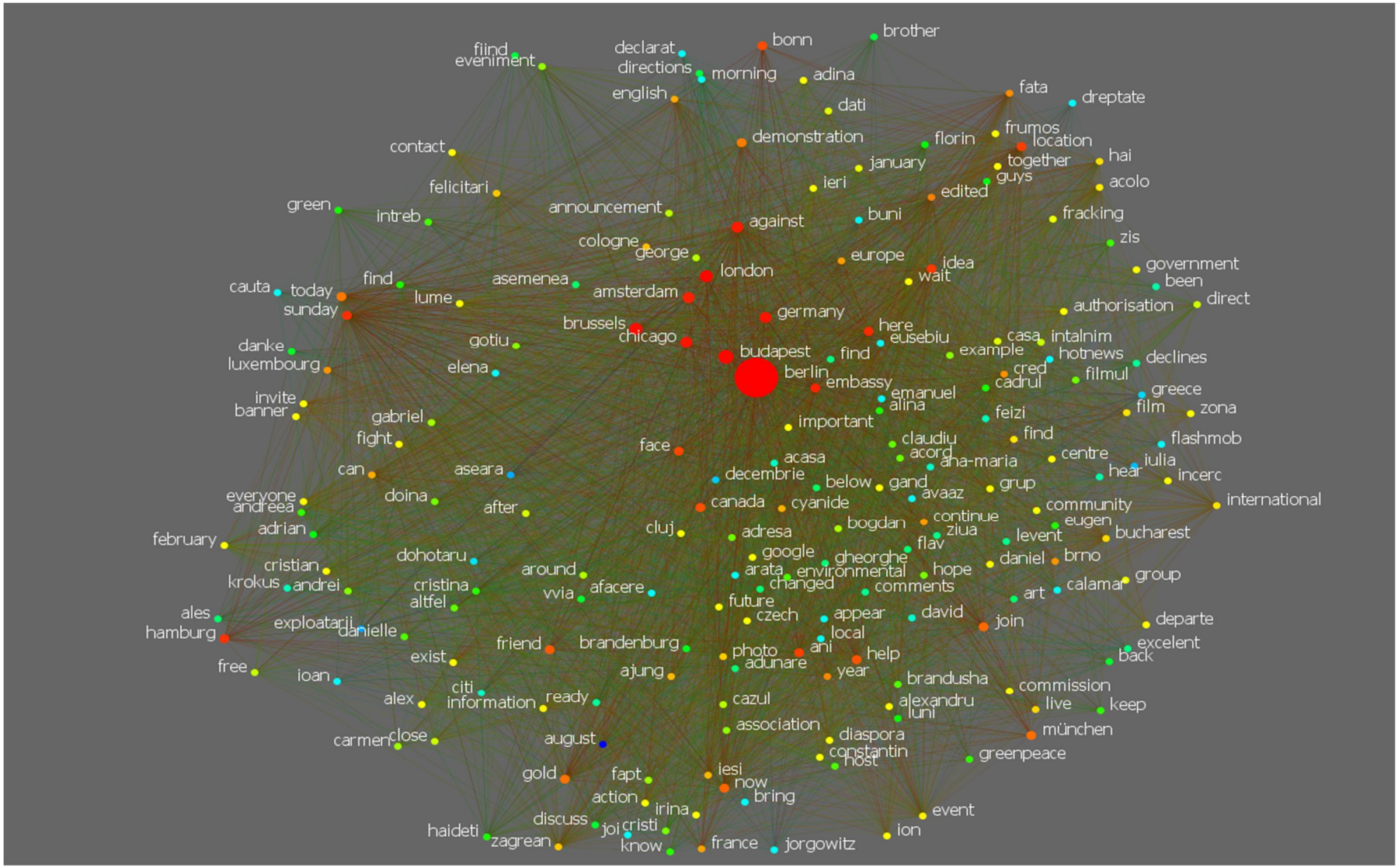


Table 1: Frequency count and centrality for key identity concepts on Twitter (A-Z)

Concept	Frequency	Betweenness Centrality (unscaled)	In-degree Centrality (unscaled)
activist	140	198	74
against	220	42	114
cyanide	1641	568	2330
environment	87	168	60
Europe	416	706	296
Gabriel	274	2045	154
global	211	121	284
gold	2109	62	2990
green	49	0	24
mining	2807	1685	4178
parliament	502	215	500
protest	4300	2880	3540
quiet	484	1825	214
resistance	1453	1766	3048
Romanian	1609	1191	1628
solidarity	153	1344	156
#rosiamontana	25845	7074	29916
#rosiamontanaint	1790	2773	1338
#salvatirosiamontana	902	2043	1640
#saverosiamontana	1602	2567	3618
#unitisalvam	8454	10063	19324

Table 2: Frequency count and centrality for key organizational concepts and users on Twitter (A-Z)

Concept	Frequency	Betweenness Centrality (unscaled)	In-degree Centrality (unscaled)
action	96	22	80
demonstration	90	370	20
event	34	146	34
flashmob	76	0	120
foto	177	0	126
join	124	105	40
music	9	1566	4
November	34	282	8
petition	131	252	84
rain	89	0	28
square	165	167	270
WWF	172	0	14
yesterday	85	0	48

Table 3: Frequency count and centrality for key identity concepts on Facebook (A-Z)

Concept	Frequency	Betweenness Centrality (unscaled)	In-degree Centrality (unscaled)
activist	64	3322	188
against	1685	915	228
commission	774	689	20
community	176	2415	16
cyanide	1775	241	210
diaspora	216	0	12
Europe	820	149	148
environmental	180	0	46
exploitation	200	0	6
fight	316	0	2
Gabriel	548	0	6
gold	914	0	42
group	385	763	38
international	308	588	12
together	206	134	28

Table 4: Frequency count and centrality for key organizational concepts on Facebook (A-Z)

Concept	Frequency	Betweenness Centrality (unscaled)	In-degree Centrality (unscaled)
action	242	6076	28
authorisation	6	3435	20
banner	172	2811	10
demonstration	135	1275	40
embassy	490	4910	140
event	1578	9506	196
flashmob	50	0	64
gather	121	2536	4
Greenpeace	68	3490	8
here	790	3213	54
hotel	13	1531	14
invite	191	2981	10
join	625	3144	98
location	473	8659	46
morning	115	0	100
photo	647	0	20
protest	67	0	80
Sunday	1046	4513	118
today	768	2552	192

[i] Those powers included the right to forcibly resettle the population living in a mining project development area through compulsory purchase orders (Wong, 2013).

[ii] The country had previously experienced a mining accident in the year 2000 when a tailings pond at a mine in Baia Mare, northern Romania, burst its banks following significant rainfall. Tailings containing cyanide and heavy metal seeped into the Tisza and Danube rivers leading to what was at the time "the most serious environmental catastrophes in European history" (Verseck, 2013).

[iii] Classically defined as one's cognizance of one's membership of a social group, "the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978:63)

[iv] The hashtags were: #piatauniversitatii, #protestrosiamontana, #RosiaMontana, #SalvatiRosiaMontana, #saverosiamontana, #unitisalvam, #weloverosiamontana.

[v] It should also be noted that Twitter algorithms curate the data to, for instance, actively remove spam messages from the stream (Burgess and Bruns, 2012). Therefore, Search API data should not be regarded as fully representative of communication on Twitter.

[vi] In line with Carley (1997:83) I concentrate on the *local network* of locality concepts. In this research, the local network comprises all concepts directly linked to the locality concepts.

[vii] In attendance were representatives for the groups from Barcelona, Berlin, Brussels, Cologne, Dublin, Hannover, London, Louvain-la-Neuve, Madrid, Munich, Paris, Vienna.

[viii] "Unitisalvam" (in English, "united we save") was an abridgement of the main slogan "Uniti Salvăm Roşia Montană"coined in the early days of the protests.

[ix] The dissimilar densities of the two networks precluded a like-for-like comparison of the locality networks on Facebook and Twitter. Therefore, I report unscaled centrality scores for the identity and organizational concepts.