

ALL THE GEAR BUT NO IDEA?: HOW SMARTPHONE WIELDING CANDIDATES
FAILED TO ENGAGE THE ELECTORATE DURING THE 2012 PCC ELECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of the web as a major channel of communication has been seen as having the potential to radically alter the discussion of politics and the exchange of political information. Nowhere has this been more evident than in the field of campaigning. Thus far, work on the web and political campaigns in the UK has concentrated disproportionately on the national level through the study of general and European elections. This paper aims to expand this focus by offering an account of web campaign during the 2012 Police Crime Commissioner (PCC) elections. The PCC elections, aside from offering a new level of campaigning to explore, are also likely to differ significantly from previous campaigns studies as they featured: low public interest, a strong anti-political bias, and the presence of viable independent candidates. This paper focuses on identifying the role of the web in the PCC elections and the extent to which it was used to fulfil different campaign functions: persuasion, mobilisation, intelligence gathering and consultation. Data to answer this research question comes from three sources: analysis of the hyperlink networks created by candidates through their campaign sites, structural analysis of campaign websites, and content analysis of Twitter messages exchanged during the campaign.

INTRODUCTION

The Police Crime Commissioner elections represent a new type of election in UK politics. In terms of the constituencies contested, the voting system and role of Police Crime Commissioner (PCC), they are novel. At the same time, the PCC elections also took place in a changing campaign environment where new technologies provided fresh and unmediated channels through which to contact potential voters. This paper aims to explore the use of online campaigning by candidates and their campaigns in the 2012 PPC campaign. It does this through the analysis of three data sets gathered at different scales: top-level analysis of the structural features of campaign networks created by the hyperlinks between campaign web presences,

analysis of the structure of campaign websites and finally through the analysis of individual messages posted on the social network Twitter. Although this is intended as a broad survey of the online elements of campaigns, there are a number of specific issues that we set out to address. The 2012 PCC elections represented a unique set of circumstances. Public apathy and a strong anti-political sentiment meant that for the first time independent candidates without the backing of a mainstream political party were in with a significant chance of victory (assuming they could muster the resource required to stand). In the final result Independent candidates got 28% of the vote and took 11 of the 41 force areas contested. Whilst the leading assumption has been that web campaigns will benefit better resourced and better supported mainstream candidates, the PCC election offers an opportunity to observe web campaigns by non-partisans in a competitive environment. In addition, we set out to explore how campaigns differed in their approaches to online tools, in particular the function of web campaigning within campaigns. Were candidates using the web to persuade voters that they were the best candidate, as a way of coordinating the followers they already had around useful activities, or potentially as a listening tool to gather ideas from the electorate?

What follows is an overview of the PPC campaign, including the results and the controversy surrounding the final average turnout figure of 15% (Electoral Commission, 2013: 32). We then go on to explore the development of online campaigning in the UK and more widely, including debates around candidate's attitudes to interactivity. Following this we specify the main research questions we are seeking to answer in this analysis. The remaining sections of the paper outline the three sources of data and associated methods as well as a discussion of the results of the analysis. Finally the conclusions summarise our findings and attempt to distil some lessons for future study of online campaigning.

BACKGROUND

Following the 2010 election the coalition government committed itself to introducing greater accountability to the police force in the UK by creating directly elected Police Crime Commissioners to replace appointed Police Authorities. The 2012 PCC election campaign took place towards the end of 2012, with polling day on 15 November 2012. At stake were the positions of Police Crime Commissioner in 41 police force areas. The after action report by the Electoral Commission notes that the final turnout (averaged across the 41 areas) was 15.1% the lowest ever for a non-local government election in peacetime (Electoral Commission, 2013: 6). The Electoral Reform Society lambasted the running of the PCC election. In a report entitled *How Not to Run an Election* they argued that voters were encouraged to stay home in large numbers as they lacked sufficient information about who they were voting for and the nature of the PCC role (Garland & Terry, 2012: 9). The ERS report also argues that the lack of information was exacerbated by the decision not to allow candidates a postal electoral address as was the custom in general elections (ibid: 10). As a result, for many candidates the web became the default platform for their campaigns.

It is also worth noting a strong current of anti-politics running through the country regarding the PCC election. The ERS report cites 19% of those choosing not to vote on the grounds that they disagreed with the election of 'police officials' (ibid: 9). Earlier polling had also revealed a strong public rejection of the concept of political PCCs. An IPSOS MORI poll carried out before the election suggested that 30% of potential voters, if they did vote, would choose to vote for a candidate that did not represent a political party.¹ As well as issues associated with a lack of information about candidates and the general public confusion over the new PCC roles, the PCC elections took place amongst a public that were decidedly uncertain

¹ Survey of 1281 people carried out by IPSOS MORI on behalf of the Transitional Board of the Association of Police Crime Commissioners, results reported 18 October 2012

about the premise of introducing greater accountability to the police through the use of elected PCCs. Certainly a significant portion of voters were keen to keep PCC roles outside the divisions of party politics by voting for independent candidates.

Aside from driving down turnout (still further affected by the decision to hold the elections in chilly and dark November) and upping the prospects of Independent candidates, the main effect of these trends was to drive publicity hungry but resource poor candidates online in order to try and cover their (huge) potential constituencies on limited budgets. The timing of this development is significant is as much as it coincides with the emergence of the World Wide Web (hereafter web) as a key and near-universal platform in election campaigning. Beginning with the 1997 general election candidates' initial web presences were largely composed of unimpressive static pages (Chadwick, 2006: 158). Estimates from the 2001 election saw around 25% of candidates maintaining an online presence (Coleman, 2001; Ward & Gibson, 2003). This rose to 37% of candidates in 2005 (Gibson & Lusoli, 2005: 16). 2010 saw significant changes brought about by the emergence of social media and improved mobile phone capabilities tools that expanded online audiences and meant that the web could no longer be written off as a sideshow. Around 80% of candidates in the 2010 general election used the web in some form, primarily this took the form of campaign websites, but around half of campaigns also used some form of social media tool (Lee, 2013). From 2010 onwards the web has become a vitally important campaign tool adopted near universally.

Aside from the adoption of new technology, where available research is less clear is on the role of the web within election campaigns. Within the design of the web, and in particular the design of Web 2.0 tools such as social media, there is an embedded expectation that tools are interactive. O'Reilly use the concept of an 'Architecture of Participation' to refer to online tools such as Facebook that do not provide their own content but expect users to populate a skeletal framework that they provide (O'Reilly, 2005; Ghel, 2011). The basic assumption of the current incarnation of the Web is essentially participatory. This has always been a component of the Web and for some writers the greatest asset of new web technologies is that they bring an

end to the broadcast model of information distribution, allowing users to ask questions, share content and select their own information (Anderson, 2007; Rheingold, 1993). In contrast to an interactive and participatory vision however, politics, and political campaigning has largely been seen as sticking to the kind of top down broadcast model. Interacting with voters is seen as time-consuming and in some ways dangerous as voters' questions can force campaigning candidates to reveal unpopular policy details as opposed to sticking to generic platitudes (Stromer-Galley, 2000; Coleman, 2001). At the national level there has been some indication that campaigns may slowly becoming more interactive (Jackson & Lilleker, 2010; Lilleker & Jackson, 2010). However, with the possible exception of Twitter, 2010 election constituency campaigns were fairly devoid of public exchanges of information, although the content of private communications more difficult to observe (Lee, 2013). There is some question however whether independent candidates will similarly reject the participatory aspects of the web, although this has been difficult to test in the UK given the poor prospects for independents at the general election. For the first time the PCC elections provides the opportunity to examine web use amongst independent candidates with an acknowledged genuine chance for success. Previous online campaigns have been pervaded by established interests pervading the online sphere and maintaining the relative positions of minor and major parties i.e. the process of normalization (Margolis et al, 1999). However the unknown quantity of the PCC position, added to public ambivalence towards established interests capturing the role and the fact that the Metropolitan Police (London police force) was not being contested meant that the normal rules of established dominance may not apply.

In contrast to the 2010 general election the PCC elections represent a considerably different situation which may produce a different form of campaigning than that seen at the most recent general election. Candidates that are unable to physically visit voters doorsteps may spend more of their time online and consequently cultivate a more open and interactive online campaign presence. In addition, the strong anti-political mood surrounding the elections and expected low turnout may have acted to give independent candidates a genuine chance of

victory in many areas. This is a unique feature of the PCC elections as UK politics typically does not reward independent candidates. As such, this is the first chance to observe how independent candidates use web campaign tools in the context of an election where they stand a genuine chance of victory. To explore these features of the PCC campaigns we proposed the following research questions:

1. How were PCC candidates web campaign presences structured in relation to other candidates and sources of information?
2. What were the roles of PCC campaign web pages, were they tools for broadcasting information, campaign organisation or public consultation?
3. How did PCC candidates use Twitter?
4. How did these approaches differ between independent and partisan candidates?

In answering these questions we hoped to provide a broad based analysis of web campaigning during the 2012 PCC election campaigns. In addition however we also aimed to use the 2012 PCC elections as a laboratory firstly to explore how open and interactive campaigns were in light of having few other options to consult with voters i.e. on the doorstep. Equally, the 2012 PCC elections offered a unique opportunity to compare the behaviour of independent candidates with those affiliated to mainstream political parties.

DATA & METHODS

To accomplish these goals we adopted a range of methods to capture and analyse data. Beginning at the broadest level we set out to understand how campaign web presences were structured through an analysis of their hyperlinks. Following this we concentrated more specifically on campaign web sites, seeking to develop an understanding of the number of features exhibited by campaign sites and the extent to which candidates prioritised interactive features over traditional persuasive and organisational functions. Finally, we were able to

capture the behaviour of candidates in more detail through the analysis of candidates use of Twitter centred on the #PCC hash tag.

Approach to gathering hyperlinks

Using hyperlinks to map online networks is now theoretically grounded as a web epistemology (Rogers, 2004) and practically established as a research technique (Ackland & Gibson, 2004; Rogers & Marre, 2000). Havalais (2008, 48) has argued that hyperlinks are ‘... the currency and connective tissue of the networked society’. Park et al., (2005) and Ackland et al (2007) have identified a series of functions that hyperlinks may perform, such as: information provision; network building; identity building; audience sharing; and, message amplification. More recently Badouard and Monnoyer-Smith (2013) have shown how hyperlinks have been used as political resource to mobilise individuals and run online collective actions.

The approach used here seeks to examine the particular ways, or patterns of connections, in which hyperlinks have structured the Web. This approach describes and analyses the topography of the Web by drawing upon Social Network Analysis (SNA) to understand the particular role and significance of campaigners’ websites during these elections. The application of SNA in this context is also now empirically grounded (Park, 2003; Lusher and Ackland, 2011; Hepburn, 2012). The particular facility of SNA here is that it renders visible structural relations through delineating the ties (hyperlinks) that connect social bodies (websites) and in doing so helps to illuminate the effects of social agency and social structure upon social action (Crossley, 2010).

Five constituencies were selected as a cross-section from the 41 areas in England and Wales that were contesting the election. Accordingly we chose two rural areas from the south-east and west and three metropolitan areas covering the midlands, the north-west and east of the country. Within each constituency online hyperlink networks were gathered using the VOSON

(Ackland, 2008) web-crawler software. VOSON was set to “crawl” the Web following outward bound hyperlinks from a pre-determined set of web pages: a “seedset”. For each constituency this ‘seedset’ comprised each of the candidates’ websites or urls. The results from each of the initial crawls were examined and websites that were deemed not relevant to this network, that is , they did not explicitly reference the PCC election were deleted and the remaining sites were retained as an enlarged ‘seedset’. This ‘seedset’ was then used by VOSON to crawl all the inbound links between these sites. In this way we attempted to collect all a complete online hyperlinked network that referenced the PCC election for each of the selected constituencies. Each of these networks was exported to NodeXL (<http://nodexl.codeplex.com>) which was used to analyse and produce the network maps seen below.

Approach to measuring web campaign tools

In order to measure campaign’s use of web campaign tools a structural analysis approach was adopted based on reviewing and noting down systematically the features of candidate websites. This approach to measuring the use of campaign sites has a long history in the study of web campaigning having been deployed in a diverse range of campaigns in one form or another. For example, Yannas and Lapps (2005) systematically collected design data from candidates in the 2002 Greek municipal elections. Similar approaches in the US have relied on data collected from Congressional campaign sites (Druckman, et al, 2007). In addition, a study of the 2004 European Elections also followed the same approach to compare political actors online across 11 European countries (Jankowski, et al, 2005). Specific to the UK approaches based on counting website functions have been used to explore the use of the web by sitting MPs (Ward & Lusol, 2007) and in general election campaigns (Ward & Gibson, 2003).

In this instance, the campaign of every candidate was identified online using. Starting with their main web presence, the use of specific features was then recorded on a spreadsheet.

This was an iterative process, meaning that the researcher did not begin with a list of features to look for, but constructed the list as the process went on in a process akin to a grounded theory approach (Bryman, 2009). An initial sample of 12 campaigns was taken at the start of the campaign in order to form the basis for the framework. The bulk of the remaining data collection was done in the three days following the vote on 15 November and additional categories were created as necessitated by the data. This allowed for the capture of data across the entire campaign, but before candidates were likely to take down their campaign web presences. The final dataset was then evaluated to see if any features could reasonably be collapsed into one another. The features were then grouped under a number of headings, either mobilising, persuasive or consultative, and then used as the basis for additive indices that could be compared across different groups, e.g. independents and partisan candidates

This approach is useful in that it allows for the choices made during web design to be quantified and analysed statistically. However, there are a number of limitations to a structural analysis approach that mean it is best suited to situations where it can be supplemented with additional data. Firstly, this approach assumes that the design of websites is a conscious decision made by candidates and uses this assumption to derive meaning. This may not be the cases where candidates have asked agents or other campaign workers to design their site. Secondly, the presence of a feature on a website cannot always be equated with importance. For instance, a candidate may adopt a news feed on a page but then seldom update it. In contrast, a candidate may only have one tool for providing information on their site but rely on it so heavily that it becomes essential to their campaign. In practice an approach focused on the structure can only tell us so much about a campaign, and although this features a more detailed unit of analysis than an entirely top level approach (see HNA above) there it does not give a complete picture as to how tools were used.

Approach to harvesting Twitter data

Increased use of portable internet enabled devices such as smart phones and tablet computers has exacerbated the use of Twitter and in turn is of interest to political candidates. On the surface it seems President Obama with 41 million followers, Number 10 and David Cameron with 3 million followers combined suggests a fantastic opportunity for politicians to foster their 'micro-celebrity' (Marwick and Boyd 2011). In the same way sports and music stars are drawn to Twitter as a platform that allows for public exchange of short messages, it seems to suit the ego of aspiring political egos (Rui and Whinston; Hutchins 2011).

The appeal of Twitter for politicians and candidates is increasingly well documented (Larrson and Moe 2012, Golbeck et al 2011). In turn both journalists and social scientists now crave these data, the social media interactions that seem to provide a transaction of political campaigning. It seems Twitter data can shed light on electoral behaviour (Baxter et al 2011) and performance (Tumasjan et al 2011). In addition to a political imperative to understand Twitter, there is also commercial (understanding and predicting consumer behaviour), democratic (understanding social movements) and practice imperatives (understanding changes to professional practice) (see Jeffares 2014: 80). In all these literatures we find the challenge of organisations criticised for failing to use Twitter to its fullest potential as a tool for two way communication and engagement. Instead organisations, it is argued find it easier to broadcast links and news of products. The great promise for marketers, charity fund raisers, TV producers and politicians alike is that interaction breeds brand loyalty, increased donations, viewer loyalty and voter engagement and support. These relatively new mobile tools appear to come naturally to some, offering a means to foster a latent vanity project or an unquenchable extroversion. For others the digital record of activity and exposure to cyber-bullying, trial by twitter and trolls evokes anxiety. For some it complements and extends traditional techniques of campaigning whereas for others it offers relatively little opportunity.

For this project we are interested in how many and in what ways PCC candidates used Twitter to supplement their campaign. We combine a structured analysis of Twitter profiles with text analytics. We identified every candidate with a Twitter account and the handle used for campaigning purposes. In most cases these were listed as part of their online campaign materials. We were greatly aided by Twitter users who had compiled lists of PCC candidates using Twitter's list function. Not all candidates set up new accounts for campaign purposes as many were existing councillors or active Twitter users. In most instances the handle, the unique username they adopted was their name @JohnSmith or in cases where they had set up bespoke PCC accounts their name and police authority @EssexJohn, or their name and explicit mention of PCC, @John4PCC. We visited every account to verify the handle ID with a candidate their police area and their performance in the election. During the visit we recorded how many times they had tweeted (posted a message), how many people they followed and how many followers they currently they had. We also coded if the account was active or dormant, based on recent activity. We also recorded if the account was used principally for the PCC election or was used for general or other forms of campaigning or public office. In the case of most of the bespoke PCC account the accounts remained online but not used to post a message since the campaign. While visiting the site we also noted other interesting features around the use of imagery or choice of bio statement.

In addition to understanding who was on Twitter we were also interested in how they interacted with the broader discussion surrounding the election. The Home Office who were responsible for implementing the election created a social media campaign "#MyPCC" complete with YouTube videos, Flickr photos and a Facebook page. They encouraged candidates and members of the public to tag messages related to the election as PCC. Despite doggedly sticking to the MyPCC tag throughout the build up to the campaign much of the discussion was tagged with #PCC (Jeffares 2014). We collected a dataset of 46,419 publicly available tweets made between 19th October and the day of the PCC election. They were

fetches at 15minute intervals from the public API using the keywords “PCC”, that drew in for instance #MyPCC, #PCC, PCC, #PCCelection, as well as tweets, metadata or Twitter handles featuring PCC. The public API offers a sample of the data, this was verified as offering 85% of tweets expressing PCC during that time period (Jeffares 2014: 100). We were then able to draw on the dataset to explore how many times our candidates featured and to code the types of activity. Through this process we identified 1591 tweets from candidates in the dataset. As with the website analysis above we developed a grounded coding scheme to categorise the types of tweets. Codes included reporting activity, announcing activity, Retweeting positive messages about the campaign, replying with thanks, thanking people or institutions, disseminating links to materials, answering questions, pledging policy, or directly appealing for votes. The tweets were coded by two coders and the coding verified.

1. RepAct - Reporting Activity
2. AnnAct - Announcing activity,
3. RTPos - Retweeting positive messages about the campaign,
4. RepThank - replying with thanks,
5. ThanksP - thanking people or institutions,
6. HereLink - disseminating links to materials,
7. AnsQ - answering questions,
8. Pledge -pledging policy
9. Appeal - directly appealing for votes.
10. ComOrg – commenting on the organisation of the PCC election – positively or negatively
11. Neg –mentioning rival candidates or backers/parties
12. Other – other tweets.

Some limitations of these approaches should be highlighted. The work of collating candidates Twitter handles was carried out in January 2014 some 14 months since the election. In the case of bespoke PCC accounts that were abandoned soon after the election this 14 month gap is unproblematic. It does however prevent us making claims that x% of candidates were on active on Twitter during the election. Given the widespread use of general accounts by candidates who were existing councillors or public figures, nor is it possible to report how many tweets on average were sent by candidates. Although the dormant bespoke accounts offer a

lasting record from which we can identify broad patterns of use and in particular those candidates who were clearly new to Twitter and had most likely joined in preparation for their campaign launch. The availability of the dataset of PCC tweets also offers insight into activity but not all activity related to the election mentions PCC, for instance a candidate replying to a question about an aspect of their manifesto. Furthermore it is only a sample of the total activity, albeit 85%.

We identified 135 of the 198 (68%) candidates having publicly listed and acknowledged Twitter accounts. Our analysis of Twitter profiles permitted us to compile a database of candidates, by area, political party affiliation, and election outcome. We therefore noted the twitter handle (ID), in addition to collate the number of tweets posted, how many people they follow and how many followers they have amassed. We recorded whether the current handle was bespoke (e.g. @John4PCC) or personal/general use (@JohnSmith) and whether the account was dormant or active (used in last 3 months).

The following documents the results from the analysis of these three different research approaches to understanding the ways in which the various PCC candidates used the online media to further their campaigns.

Hyperlink network analysis

Figures 1-5, below, show the hyperlink network maps for each of the five selected constituencies along with their candidates' election results. The nodes have been labelled to identify candidates that had an online presence – and not all did – along with their position in the election result. Other sites have also been labelled either because they were prominent in this or to help explain the structure of the network. Node size, or prominence, on each map is directly proportionate to its score on a 'betweenness-centrality' measure. This is a network

measure that is used to indicate the extent to which an actor may play a gateway or bridging role in the network. In other words it serves to show how that actor may facilitate or block the flow of information and connections between and within networks.

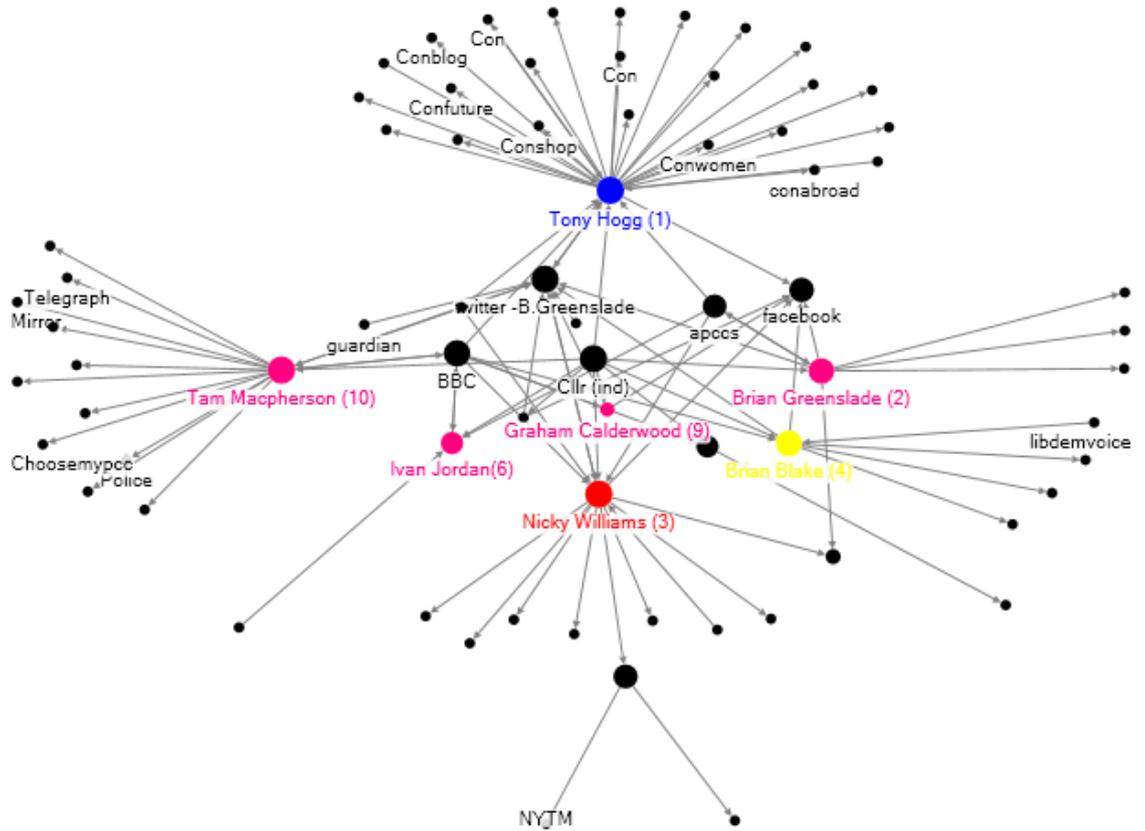
The maps have a number of structural attributes in common. None of the networks are particularly dense, in other words they are not highly connected, cohesive networks where every node is linked to almost every other node. Loosely connected networks can be effective in quickly facilitating the flow of information from otherwise distant parts of the network as long as there are 'bridges' between network segments and that these 'bridges' actually serve as conduits for information that is useful to the individual or group concerned (Granovetter, 1973; Burt, 1992). Each of our network maps possesses a number of prominent websites that appear to function as a 'bridge' linking different segments of the network. The websites that may serve this purpose in our network maps are : media sites – the Guardian; the BBC; the website of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners; social media - twitter accounts; facebook pages and, the leading blog of the PCC campaign the 'topofthecops' blog. However, while these websites generally do serve to link the wider network together they are nearly always, except in the case of twitter accounts and facebook pages, one link away from the candidates' websites that serve as the gateway to that candidate's immediate and, on the face of it, partisan online support. In this respect then this raises a question as to the efficacy of the various hyperlinking strategies deployed here – do they militate for (Benkler, 2006) or against (Hindman, 2010) the creation of an online networked public sphere or fifth estate (Dutton, 2010).

The network maps are more structurally similar than not. The feature that distinguishes one network map from another is generally the way in which candidates might employ particular online platforms to link to other parts of the network. Thus in Figure 2 (Humberside) that famed early adopter of online technology – at least in party political terms- John Prescott has used twitter, as well as his website, to strategically link – and presumably engage – with all parts of the network. Perhaps this is not surprising given that he employed nationbuilder.org to run his online campaign. By contrast the winning candidate in the West Midlands (Figure 5)

used only facebook for his online presence and moreover did not link to any other part of the network. Similarly eschewing an online presence in the wider network were the Ukip and the Labour candidate in Kent (figure 3) both of whom did not employ any hyperlinking strategy to link to any other part of the network.

Figure 1. Hyperlink network map and election results for PCC constituency Devon and Cornwall

Devon and Cornwall



DEVON AND CORNWALL: Tony Hogg (Conservative) elected

TURNOUT DOES NOT INCLUDE SPOILT BALLOTS

Turnout: 190,665 (14.7%)

Second round

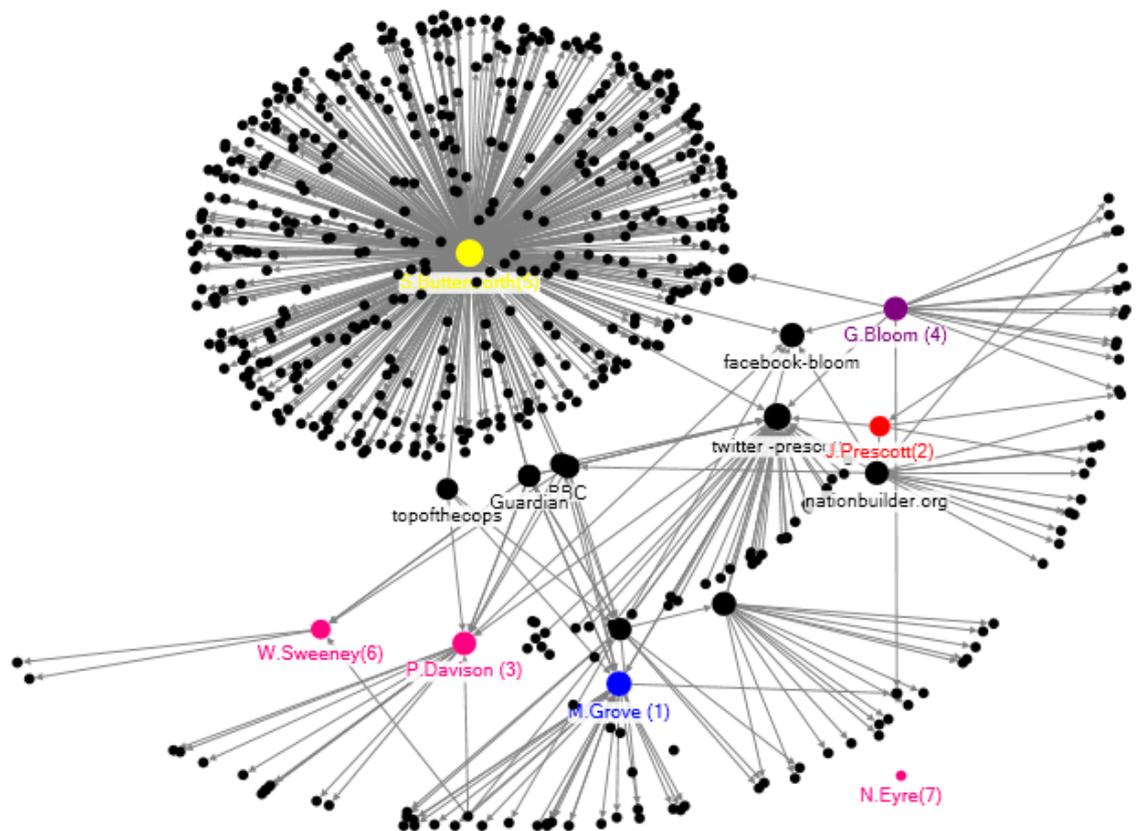
Candidate	Party	Final total	%
Tony Hogg	Conservative	64,419	65.1
Brian Greenlade	Independent	37,243	34.9

First round

Candidate	Party	1st pref	%
Tony Hogg	Conservative	55,257	28.05%
Brian Greenlade	Independent	24,719	12.54%
Nicky Williams	Labour	24,196	12.28%
Brian Blake	Liberal Democrat	23,948	12.15%
Bob Smith	UKIP	16,433	8.34%
Ivan Jordan	Independent	12,382	6.29%
William Morris	Independent	10,586	5.37%
John Smith	Independent	10,171	5.16%
Graham Calderwood	Independent	8,667	4.40%
Tam Macpherson	Independent	4,306	2.18%

Figure 2. Hyperlink network map and election results for PCC constituency of Humberside

Humberside



HUMBERSIDE: Matthew Grove (Conservative) elected

TURNOUT DOES NOT INCLUDE SPOILT BALLOTS

Turnout: 133,762 (19.15%)

Second round

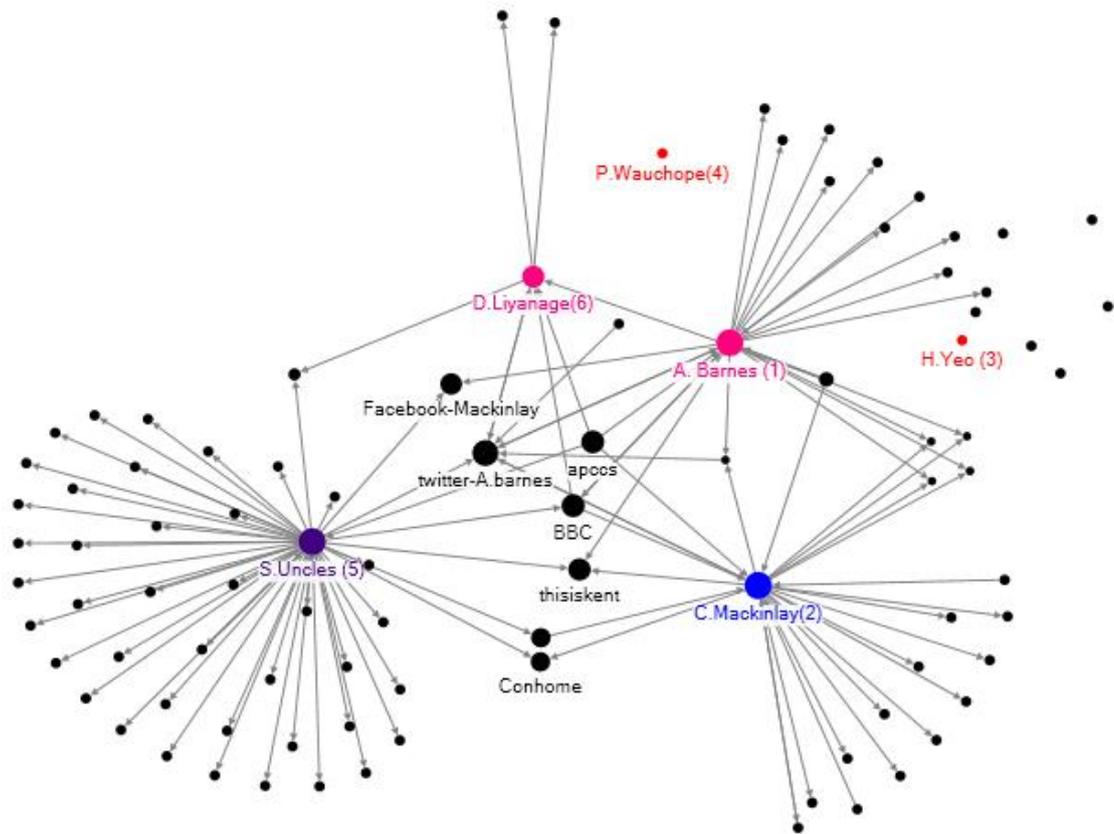
Candidate	Party	Final total	%	Status
Matthew Grove	Conservative	42,164		Elected
John Prescott	Labour	39,933		

First round

Candidate	Party	1st pref	%	2nd pref
John Prescott	Labour	33,282	24.9%	6,651
Matthew Grove	Conservative	29,440	22%	12,724
Paul Davison	Independent	28,807	21.5%	
Godfrey Bloom	UKIP	21,484	16.1%	
Simone Butterworth	Liberal Democrat	11,655	8.7%	
Walter Sweeney	Independent	5,118	3.8%	
Neil Eyre	Independent	3,976	3%	

Figure 3. Hyperlink network map and election results for PCC constituency of Kent

Kent



KENT: Ann Barnes (Independent) elected

TURNOUT DOES NOT INCLUDE SPOILT BALLOTS

Turnout: 204,917 (16%)

Second round

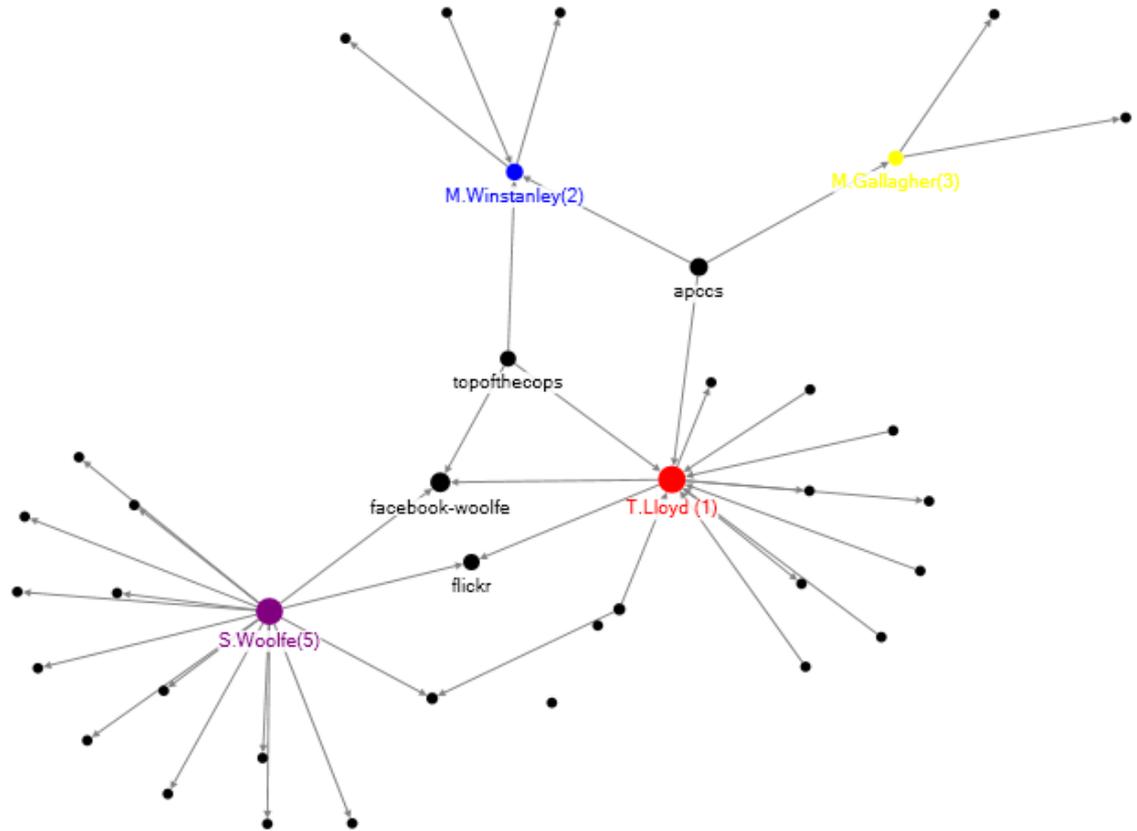
Candidate	Party	Final total %	Status
Ann Barnes	Independent	114,137	65.5 Elected
Craig Mackinlay	Conservative	60,248	34.5

First round

Candidate	Party	1st pref	%	2nd pref
Ann Barnes	Independent	95,901	46.8	18,236
Craig Mackinlay	Conservative	51,671	25.2	8,577
Harriet Yeo	Labour	23,005	11.2	
Piers Wauchope	UKIP	15,885	7.8	
Steve Uncles	English Democrats	10,789	5.3	
Dai Liyanage	Independent	7,666	3.7	

Figure 4. Hyperlink network map and election results for PCC constituency of Manchester

Manchester



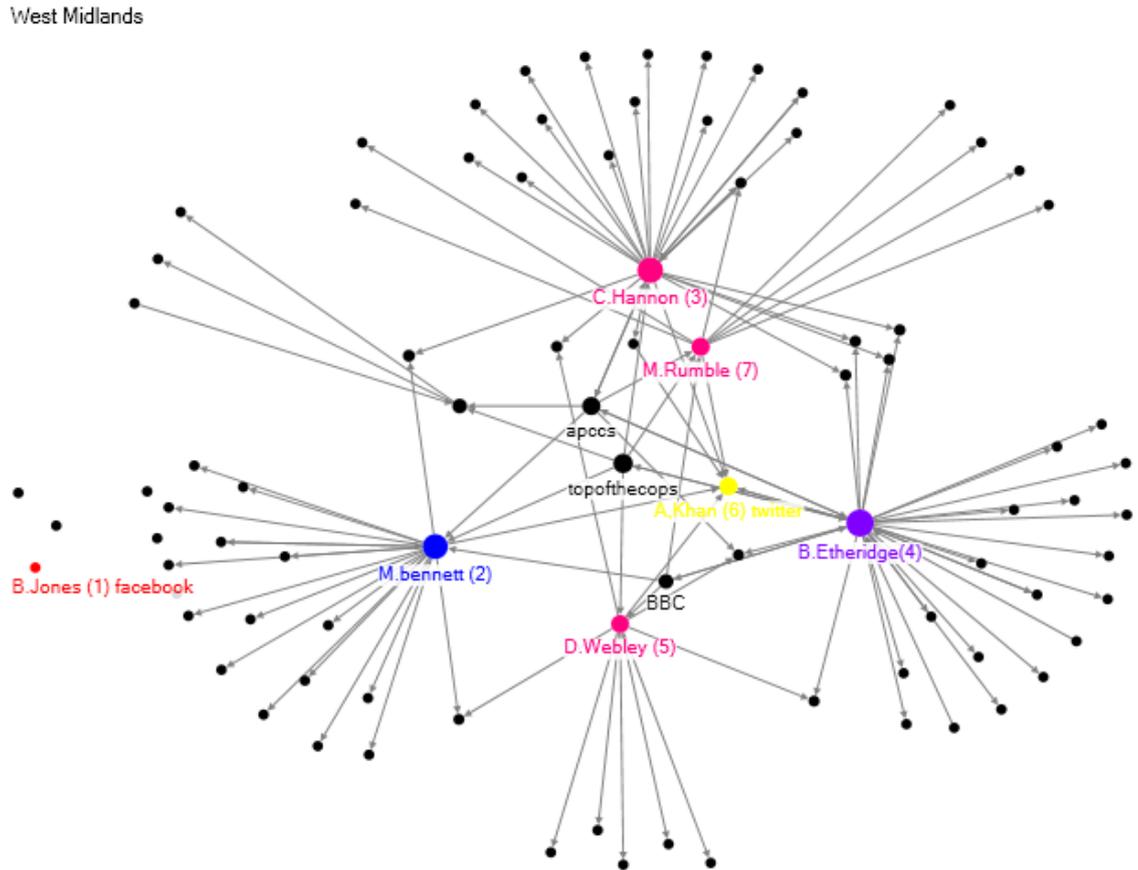
GREATER MANCHESTER: Tony Lloyd (Labour) elected

TURNOUT DOES NOT INCLUDE SPOILED BALLOTS

Turnout: 272,153 (13.6%)

Candidate	Party	1st pref	%
Tony Lloyd	Labour	139,437	51.2
Michael Winstanley	Conservative	42,478	15.6
Matt Gallagher	Liberal Democrats	40,318	14.8
Roy Warren	Independent	26,664	9.8
Steven Woolfe	UK Independence Party	23,256	8.6

Figure 5. Hyperlink network map and election results for PCC constituency of West Midlands



WEST MIDLANDS: Bob Jones (Labour) elected

TURNOUT DOES NOT INCLUDE SPOILT BALLOTS

Turnout: 238,384 (12.0%)

Second round

Candidate	Party	Final total	%	Status
Bob Jones	Labour	117,388	67.8	Elected
Matt Bennett	Conservative	55,685	32.2	

First round

Candidate	Party	1st pref	%	2nd pref
Bob Jones	Labour	100,130	42	17,258
Matt Bennett	Conservative	44,130	18.5	11,555
Cath Hannon	Independent	30,778	12.9	
Bill Etheridge	UKIP	17,563	7.4	
Derek Webley	Independent	17,488	7.3	
Ayoub Khan	Liberal Democrat	15,413	6.5	
Mike Rumble	Independent	12,882	5.4	

Content analysis

In the campaign overall, websites were extremely common. In total 192 campaigns were identified in the sample and a website was identified for 90% (n=172) of these campaigns. Independent campaigns made up the largest group of campaign websites (n=50), followed by the three mainstream political parties and then UKIP. A number of candidates also identified themselves as belonging to smaller political parties including the Greens, English Democrats, British Freedom and Anti-Corruption.

TABLE: Number of Campaign Websites by Party (REVISE)

Party	Campaign Websites
Independent	50
Conservative	38
Labour	37
Liberal Democrat	21
UKIP	17
English Democrats	3
Green	1
British Freedom	1
Anti-Corruption	1

Website functions were analysed through three overall headings. Initially, local campaigns served two functions: to persuade undecided voters to vote for the candidates and to mobilise voters already persuaded to vote for the candidate (Denver & Hands, 1997). In addition the arrival of web into the campaign space has opened up the possibility of campaigns taking on a consultative dimension in which voters can interact with potential representative, theoretically creating a more interactive and consultative form of campaigning. In truth this element has been partially present in earlier campaigns such as during doorstep canvasses, public and private meetings, and voters have always been able to write a letter to candidates. The web however offers a new space in which the voting public could express their views and opinions directly to candidates. The design of this new space and the immediacy of the communication it offers raises expectations of direct candidate replies. As a result it was felt

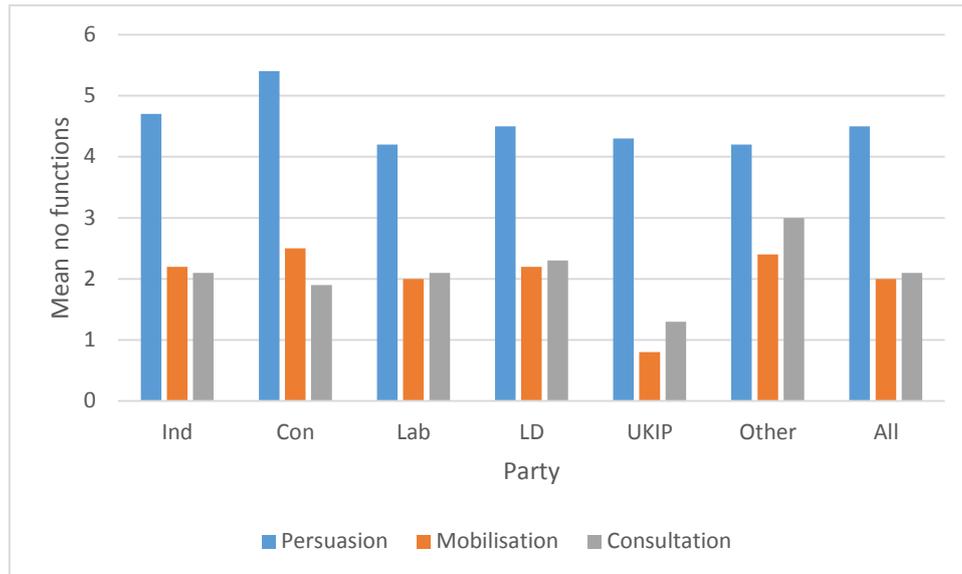
justified to include a heading in this analysis that covered consultative functions of websites. In total 27 possible website functions were identified through the initial analysis of 12 campaign sites. These were grouped under the headings of: persuasive, mobilising and consultative function.

TABLE Website functions by heading

Persuasive	Mobilising	Consultative
Picture gallery	Email subscription	Telephone no
Video	Social media subscription	Postal address
Manifesto	Social media sharing	Comments section
Statement	Upcoming events	Contact form
Personal history	Campaign map	Email address
Testimonials	Campaign calendar	Poll
Campaign news	Petition	
Party news	Volunteer	
Education on PCC	Donate	
	Join party	

Functions were binary, they were either present or absent. In order to develop an overall measure of the extent to which campaigns adopted the different website functions, the number of present features were totalled and averaged across the total number of campaigns. This allows for a comparison of the overall levels of different behaviours across parties. The results (Graph 1) show a somewhat consistent picture across the political parties with no one party standing out in any function. On average, Independent candidates did not differ substantially from mainstream candidates in their adoption of website functions. All of the parties displayed more persuasive features than either mobilising or consultative. This suggests that the role of the web site in campaigns was seen mainly as persuading the public to vote for a specific candidate by providing information about the candidate and their policies.

GRAPH: Website functions by party (n=172)



In summary, the pattern of website features did not differ markedly between different political parties. Persuasive functions designed to get voters to cast their ballots for a specific candidate were the most common.

Twitter analysis

In summary we found the median number of tweets was 736 and a followership of 496. 39 of 135 accounts were dormant.

When we explore what types of tweets these candidates used it is possible to identify a consistent range of activity. The two most common types of tweets are retweeting positive mentions by supporters, members of the public or influential users and writing updates on recent activity –who they met or where they have recently been on the campaign trail. Although not as frequent candidates also sent tweets outlining their future activities such as a radio interview or visit to a particular town. In all three cases are ample opportunities to namedrop, to mention people met, people meeting or to quote others. Some candidates were careful to mention twitter

names rather than full names (perhaps increasing likelihood of engagement). Over half the tweets expressed fall into these three categories.

We found candidates also use Twitter to make policy pledges, which they might have already set out elsewhere. These are the type of updates that could be programmed in advance to dripfeed out over the days of the election. Candidates also use tweets to share links to their websites, to articles, blogs or media clips. Some of these overlap with reporting activity, but they fall within a more passive form of broadcasting, less likely to include mention others. A further three types of tweets involve a more direct form of direct engagement. Some candidates will publically answer a question – perhaps share a link or state their view. The alternative to answering directly is to respond privately by an alternative channel (email, sms) or to ignore. The risk of answering questions comes from mentioning others in a negative way. On the contrary opportunities for mentioning others in a positive light come in the form of thanks. Candidates use Twitter to reply to messages with thanks to specific users and will also write a note of thanks and mention those that have offered their time or support to the campaign. There are some forms of mention that do not fall into the category of responding or thanking but rather offering opinion of the opposition candidates, or their sponsoring parties, a form of negative campaigning. Finally given the context of the election and the national debate about its organisation some candidates use their feed to express views on the PCC election and its organisation.

Our findings suggest four types of Twitter use in the PCC election, based on their relative use of Twitter and final outcome in the election:

#NativeWinners

The first one to tell is about those that won the election and seemed to heavily use Twitter to supplement their campaign. The two candidates that most closely characterise this have four

figure followerships and use Twitter daily, the winning candidates in Kent and Sussex. They use Twitter as a personal record of activity and a means to publically thank supporters. Writing mainly in the first person, language is filled with positive words – fantastic, excellent. They mix the political with the human – mentioning how tired they are, or include mention of their families or hunger. Although they respond to some questions they also pose questions. Most tweets are carefully tagged with official PCC hashtags, when visiting places these are also tagged (e.g. #Birmingham), when mentioning people they use their Twitter name rather than real name. They also add sentiment to tweets using invented hashtags (e.g. #verytiredcandidate).

#BattleLost

In contrast are those that seemed active on Twitter but did not win. Examples of these are the Liberal Democrats in Manchester, Labour and Conservative in Warwickshire or UKIP in Thames Valley. All show active use of Twitter through the campaign, several setting up bespoke campaign accounts. Like those that won the election they used their accounts for a range of purposes although we find in their tweets more examples of (publically) responding to questions, more examples of using Twitter to make policy pledges and broadcasting links to external media. Compared with the winners tweets there are fewer examples of retweeting positive messages (further exploration as to whether these were missed opportunities or they had fewer opportunities). Again in those that lost there were fewer examples of reporting or announcing activities (fewer activities to report or failure to document?). In short it seems although they used Twitter they did not take advantage of functions such as publicising positive messages or reporting off-line activities. Another characteristic worth exploring is the prevalence of tweets mentioning other candidates or their parties. These are all but missing in the native winners dataset.

#WonWithout

Not all candidates used Twitter a great deal or at all. There is a third group of candidates who won without seemingly making much use of Twitter. Labour in South Wales and South Yorkshire, Conservative in Thames Valley. There is an argument to say that when you have a strong track record of previous elected office (as MP, MEP or councillor) or strong party backing there is no need to embrace social media in quite the same way as an independent candidate would. In these examples above such a proposition holds. However there are some exceptions to note: the independent victors in North Wales and West Mercia deserve further exploration as two examples of those who seemed to win without the need to embrace a Twitter campaign.

#AllTheGear

As the title of this paper alludes, there is a fourth group who did not use Twitter much and did not win. The argument here is not so much to say if only they had adopted Twitter they would have won the election, but rather it reveals candidates who dipped their toe and the digital trace shows the difficulty of cultivating an engaged followership. Within this group we find followerships as few as 10 or 20 followers, who tweeted fewer than 50 times during the course of the election. The Native Winners make it look relatively easy: tweet regularly, share, question respond and thank, remain positive

Overall we cannot argue that candidates win because of Twitter. But rather it is a good platform for documenting the campaign, the schedule, activities and offering thanks. While it can work to answer questions, there are risks and it seems a better strategy is to take these interactions offline and maintain the public interaction as nothing but positive.

CONCLUSIONS

The very singularity of this PCC election - the geographical size of the constituency and the prevailing anti-politics and pro-independent sentiment amongst the electorate – that we assumed might lend itself to as a ‘testbed’ study of the current state of play of online political campaigning also served to confound our expectations. This was certainly true in looking at independent and partisan candidates where we thought we might further explore the ‘normalisation’ or ‘equalisation’ thesis – as it turned out most campaigns even those of established political parties – perhaps with the exception of John Prescott’s campaign - were struggling for campaign funds. None of the three different research approaches employed here were able to demonstrate any consistent difference between how independents or mainstream party political candidates used the web. It is perhaps worth noting, however, that both the network and twitter analysis highlighted a particular skilful use of the online media by the winning independent candidate in Kent.

The network analysis served to reveal similar structural attributes across the online networks of the five selected constituencies. This appeared to suggest ways in which websites were used to serve different campaign functions to those offered by the social media sites of twitter and facebook. In the light of this the content analysis suggests that websites were being used to persuade ‘core’ or partisan supporters to vote while the twitter analysis revealed a more nuanced approach to online campaigning using with candidates using this medium to engage with a wider range of the online public. One notable tweeting characteristic of successful candidates was the absence of any reference to competing candidates.

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