

Crowd Dynamics of Networked Protest and English Football Hooliganism

We find that whole communities suddenly fix their minds upon one object, and go mad in its pursuit; that millions of people become simultaneously impressed with one delusion, and run after it, till their attention is caught by some new folly more captivating than the first.

- Charles Mackay, *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*, 1841.

In her book “Twitter and Tear Gas”, researcher and activist Zeynep Tufekci delves into the strengths and weaknesses of organized protest in the modern age. By examining the movements of the Arab Spring, many of which she witnessed first hand, Tufekci lays out a thorough and meaningful picture of how groups of people come together in a time of increasing social distance. Tufekci presents many examples in her book which explain how crowds behave, a topic which is also tackled in “Among the Thugs”, written by Bill Buford in 1990. When reading both, I saw many similarities between the modern explanations which Tufekci gives for certain behaviours and the earlier theories presented by Buford.

Tufekci’s work explains that the Arab Spring was different from any dissent which modern sociologists and anthropologists had seen before. Instead of a steady build up towards mass movement, indicative of traditional protest and requiring huge amounts of organization, what happened was a combination of igniting events across the region sparking massive spontaneous protests. Why did this happen? Did the entirety of the middle east suddenly decide to toss out their leaders and find new ones all at once? What made 2011 different to any other year? Her answer: social media. The Arab Spring happened not because of the circulation of any new ideas, nor because people suddenly cared more. Instead, what happened was an increase in the amount of eyes being laid on the events which were transpiring. The reach that ordinary citizens now had to share their stories, which Tufekci calls someone’s “public sphere”, grew

hugely thanks to social media. The sudden growth meant that many more people both near and far could see what was going on. In turn, huge numbers of motivated individuals turned out to fight for something that they believe in.

Bill Buford's crowds work in a similar, but more traditional, sense. Each firm is a smaller public sphere, in which its members have influence. Some members have more influence than others, think of Sammy or Roy, and can reach more people. In turn, when they are present they have more influence over a crowd than others. These people are analogous to the likes of a single social media page with a large following. There was a second type of crowd in "Among the Thugs", which we saw when the England supporters travelled to Italy for the world cup. The crowd there was not like the occasions when the firms were clashing. Now they had organised together, their public spheres had intersected and as a result a larger crowd emerged. But this crowd has no single leader, it is instead multiple crowds with multiple leaders interacting. This is akin to Tufekci's understanding of why the Arab Spring was so successful at bringing a crowd together so quickly. This crowd was decentralized.

Decentralized organization has many advantages: there are no figureheads to assassinate, no spokespeople to deride, and no leader to rebel against. However what is made up for in agility is almost certainly lost in resilience. A decentralized group has no way of making decisions, no way of coming up with a leader, and an exceptionally high chance of fracturing into many pieces at the first sign of challenge. This is a problem contested at almost any level, not only that of massive protest. Think about times when you have been part of a group of friends deciding where to go for dinner: the way the situation tends to go is a series of suggestions met with either enthusiasm or dismissal, a period of confusion as some members of the group think a decision

has been made whilst others do not, and then a shift towards chaos before someone eventually steps up to take the lead and make the decision on behalf of the crowd. This is obviously not a set of steps which only arise at dinnertime, but an underlying behaviour emergent in all crowds without defined leadership. So where does football come back into all of this?

We saw examples of this behaviour in “Among the Thugs”. The primary examples being Buford’s experiences at Dawes Road between Tottenham and Manchester fans. Buford talks about times where a single crowd actor tried to incite violence from either side. There were multiple leaders vying for control of the crowd. That spectator didn’t have enough of an influence over the crowd and so each time they attempted to cross the boundary, they failed. Sometimes a leader may never emerge, and a crowd remains governed by many smaller spheres of influence. Decentralized behaviour exists at every level. On a more macro scale, a common example which Tufekci uses in her book is the civil rights movement in the United States. The Montgomery bus boycott was a year long organisational effort which consisted of many small spheres of influence coming together. The movement had organisers operating on behalf of groups made up of multiple organisations, which handled the logistics of a makeshift transit system themselves. A crowd made up of smaller crowds, if you will. A huge feat of collaboration and communication across public spheres allowed the crowd to function for an extended period of time. The leadership structure in that crowd existed not as a single large point, but as a set of smaller points interacting.

Through Tufekci’s more modern lens we see exactly the same similarities between hooliganism and protest too. An important early example of decentralized behaviour Tufekci gives is a twitter account named “TahrirSupplies”. TahrirSupplies was run by a group of students

far removed from the Cairo square where the protests were taking place, yet somehow they managed to handle logistics for field hospitals which saved lives over the 18 days of protest. They were using social media to span public spheres and facilitating for the crowd to govern itself from afar. They did not assume a leadership position in the crowd, they simply bridged a gap between public spheres which had previously been wide open. The same behaviour is seen in “Among the Thugs” when Buford is interacting with the National Front. He meets many different front members, each with a different public sphere. These spheres were connected via the various publications that Buford saw. The publications which Buford saw act like TahrirSupplies did, amplifying the noise of individuals to the crowd and soliciting a response to that. “Bulldog” was filled with individuals explaining their stance on racist actions, and in turn racism became prevalent at games because more people were able to see the signal in “Bulldog” that said it was okay to behave in a racist manner at games. This is exactly the same behaviour we saw with TahrirSupplies

Obviously there are differences in the models too. Buford’s crowds are far more susceptible to being led. Where Tufecki explains, with examples from 2011 of negotiations in Turkey, when you attempt to force a modern crowd to have a leader, it often fails. A group of groups often cannot be effectively led by a singular entity. All participants in a crowd often want to be represented and social media allows them to voice that concern much more loudly than it could before. Because the crowds in “Among the Thugs” didn't have the ability to connect their public spheres through social media, they were easy to lead. A perfect example of a crowd being manipulated in “Among the Thugs” is Buford’s experience with Sammy in Turin. A single leader, Sammy, was the controlling factor of the crowd’s behaviour. He called the shots, and the

participants followed. He has commanded enough influence over multiple public spheres which allows him to dictate the actions of the group. The way that Sammy exerted his power over the group was through his lieutenants: a group of enforcers who kept the crowd in check and listening to Sammy. This sort of leadership would have been rejected by Tufecki's connected crowds. The participants would be able to communicate and voice their opinions against the people vying for leadership. The social media facilitated communication reaches a larger number of people and as such larger crowds form to oppose it. Since Sammy's forceful form of leadership is not representative of the decentralized nature of Tufecki's crowd, the crowd would reject it. Especially over a longer time frame like the Arab Spring, in comparison to the faster, more flash fire types of crowds which formed and turned into riots in "Among the Thugs".

To me, the most interesting thing when reading Buford was not the powerful collection of metaphor he puts together, or the striking psychological insights, but instead, the interesting differences and similarities between the traditional understanding of crowds and the modern views presented by scholars like Zeynep Tufecki. Both vehicles of understanding give credence to belonging to the crowd, allowing it to take over and dictate a general direction, assimilating toward the common cause. However, crowds in the past were far more homologous and followed a structure. They had to, else there was no way that they could last. The decisions were made by a leader and enforced by those loyal to them (think of Sammy and his child lieutenants), and generally the crowd followed. The definite (but still implied) structure of the crowd meant that the participants could relinquish their conscious to the crowd and be directed by the leader.

Works Cited

TUFEKCI, ZEYNEP. *TWITTER AND TEAR GAS: the Power and Fragility of Networked*

Protest. YALE University Press, 2018.

Buford, Bill. *Among the Thugs*. Secker & Warburg, 1990.

Is football hooliganism strictly a British cultural phenomenon? Why don't the big English football clubs expand their stadium's capacities to compete with other big European clubs? Quora User. , Been working with Tier 4 students for a long time. Answered 5 years ago · Author has 11.5K answers and 41.3M answer views. · Why don't the big English football clubs expand their stadium's capacities to compete with other big European clubs? Paul Idson. , England fan and arm-chair Manager. · Suddenly, revenue was more important than the fans, and higher ticket prices meant that the only people who could regularly go to matches was the middle class or upper class. go-slow. a protest that workers make by doing their work more slowly than usual. hunger strike. the act of refusing to eat for a long period of time in order to protest about something to be on/go on ____ . industrial action. action that workers take, especially stopping work, to protest to their employers about something ____ by train drivers seriously affected rush-hour services. march. · The victim's widow ____ed at the leniency of the sentence. There's no use ____ing, I won't change my mind. ____something (North American English) They fully intend to ____the decision. rebellion. an attempt by some of the people in a country to change their government, using violence The north of the country rose in ____against the government. Crowd type, crowd dynamics, and crowd mood impact crowd behavior. So, we have found out that crowd is gathering of people and the size of the gathering is less important than the aim that unites it. There are several characteristics that describe crowd. · First and most obvious is the fact that crowd denotes a large group of people. Interesting then is the question for the lower boundary of the crowd concept. · Instances of this can be found in football hooliganism, in crazes or fads, in economic crashes or in panic situations. This crowd-like context can be real, but also more or less imaginary, as in small groups of hooligans operating quite detached from actual crowds, or of small groups of boys wreaking havoc on school buildings or telephone booths. 2 Find in the text the words that correspond in meaning to the following: to commit an act of aggression, collective security, to promote international cooperation, human rights, an alliance, to contribute, collaboration, without distinction, priorities, a chance, to adopt by the nations, special emphasis on girls, exploitation, abuse, violence, opportunity, defense, to decrease rates, criminality, health care. · Together, they are making a real difference to the lives of children in poor communities. PLAN is currently helping more than 8 million people in over 30 countries to improve their own lives. Your helping hand can turn despair to hope. · PLAN International is a worldwide charity that has been working with children and their families in poor communities for the past 58 years. People find the virtual environment awkward and very quickly get bored. There is a very strict limit on the size of natural conversations at four people. Anything bigger, and it becomes a lecture dominated by a handful of extraverts. The greatest challenge that we face regarding work is what happens to the 60% of workers who can't work from home - Elisabeth Reynolds: Executive Director, Task Force on the Work of the Future, MIT. Jean-Nicolas Reyt: Assistant Professor of Organizational Behaviour, McGill University Could working from home increase gender equality? Even as modern organisation are