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Affective Temporalities of Digital Hate Cultures

Abstract:

Hateful, misogynist and racist expressions have become mundane, even ordinary, part of digital communication. Research from Europe, US, India, Ethiopia and Brazil, have identified it as a global phenomenon with various localized practices (Pöyhtäri et al. 2019; Siapera et al. 2018; Govil and Baishya 2018; Sponholtz and Christofoletti 2018).

This chapter explores formations of hate speech in the context of far-right anti-immigrant movements in Finland. It seeks to unravel the modalities and intensities of sharing hate in the context of multidimensional, messy and conflicted online world and the ways in which it connects affective publics (Papacharissi 2015; Lünenborg 2019). Instead of trying to narrow down hate speech to exact normative definition, this chapter approaches it as a complex social practice with a variety of social, technological, political and economic consequences. The focus is on different modalities and temporalities that shape and structure affective intensities of hate speech in digital media. Hate speech takes different forms from memes and images to written blogtexts, from podcasts and music to youtube videos and amateur talkshows. These modalities are intrinsically connected to and shaped by the ways in which they travel within and across platforms and gain affective value (Ahmed 2004).The chapter explores two case studies: the first case involves the Facebook site of a street-patrolling group Soldiers of Odin and the second case explores racism debate on Twitter. By distincting between inward (Soldiers of Odin Facebook site) and outward (Twitter debate) directed hate speech, the chapter looks at the different intensities and temporalities, the anticipation, acceleration and delay that shape this communication. Finally, the chapter looks into the materiality of hate speech as digital housework: the efforts of cleaning, moderating, regulating, deleting, and editing platforms in different ways. Overall the chapter sheds light on the ways in which digital hate culture is intrinsically connected to the digital infrastructures, social media affordances and platform policies.

Affective Temporalities of Digital Hate Cultures

In 2012, I was exploring a Finnish social networking site, IRC-Gallery[1], which includes several discussion forums that adhere to the *white power* ideology. Prior to Facebook, IRC-Gallery was one of the most popular social networking sites in Finland. Founded in 2000, it reached its peak in 2008 with over 500,000 users. I explored the group 'Love your race', which had 73 members at the time openly supporting neo-nazism and the white-power movement. I quickly noticed the user nicknames,

[1] IRC referred originally to text-based Internet Relay Chat, however the use of IRC-Gallery is not limited to IRC users and it is open to all.

such as ‘honestlyRacist’ and ‘skindhead’, eventually stumbling upon the profile picture of a young black man looking down at the camera, dressed in a grey sweatshirt with a white baseball cap. I was perplexed. What was this profile doing in the group that supports racist ideology? This apparently non-white profile also claimed membership to ‘Born to be White’, ‘Thank God I’m white’, ‘Skinheads of Finland’ and ‘SS Finland’. Perhaps this was a fake profile, perhaps added to the group as a counter-act, a subversive coup, to disturb and to spoil the group. Or perhaps someone had attached this profile to the group as a way to bully the person in the picture. The image may also be an example of an intentional trolling from the person in the profile picture, to ridicule the white power ideology. The user profile also confused some of the other group members, who demanded the person leave. I was never able to trace back to the motivations behind this profile since I was not able to reach the users through their old pseudonyms. However the profile picture still remains on the site as a ghostly reminder of the early days of digital racism. The case has stayed with me as an illustrative example of the confusing logics and complex multimodality of hate speech on digital online environment. While we may never be certain whether the profile in the ‘Love your race’ group was an act of hate speech, it appeared in a group that openly declared racial hatred. The case is illustrative of the complexity of hate speech. It takes many shapes from verbal and multimodal expressions to images and actions. It confuses, disturbs and mobilizes formations of affective publics.

At the time of the study, in 2010s, the general public was unaware of the growing momentum of far-right movements and related online hate speech in some of the darker corners of the internet. However, hate speech has now infected mainstream media and politics. Today, hateful, misogynist and racist expressions have become a mundane, even ordinary, part of digital communication. Research from Europe, the US, India, Ethiopia and Brazil have identified hate speech as a global phenomenon with varying localized practices (Pöyhtäri et al., 2019; Siapera et al., 2018; Govil & Baishya, 2018; Sponholtz & Christofoletti, 2018).

This chapter proceeds as follows. First it offers an overview to recent research of digital hate speech and points out the relevance of digital media environment to growth of hate speech as well as a move in hate speech research from extreme to ordinary hate speech. The chapter then moves on to introduce the main concepts: temporality and affective publics. These concepts are applied in the two case studies that follow: the inward-oriented hate speech on the Facebook-site of a Finnish far right group Soldiers of Odin, and an outward-oriented hate speech in the context of a Twitter debate on racism.

With these examples the chapter seeks to unravel the modalities and intensities of the propagation of hate in the context of a multidimensional, complicated and conflicted online world. It also seeks to understand the ways in which hate speech connects with the notion of affective publics (Papacharissi, 2015; Lünenborg, 2019; Adlung et al., 2021). As described by Lünenborg (2019), social media are essential to the formation of affective publics, as they allow a shift from personal to

public communications with the diverse and simultaneous participation of individuals, citizens, activists, professionals or politically engaged actors.

The banal multimodal practices and cultures affiliated with the production of hateful attacks apply collective targeting, as well as visual and technological aspects of digital circulation. Notably, the proliferation of hate speech has affected digital practices, experiences and social interactions worldwide, as well as the regulatory practices of media industries and digital infrastructures in sometimes controversial ways. Hate speech shapes the public's participation in social media, and its implications travel far beyond those directly targeted or involved. Instead of trying to narrow hate speech to a precise normative definition, this chapter approaches the issue as a complex cultural phenomenon with a variety of social, technological, political and economic consequences. The focus is on the different modalities and temporalities that shape the affective intensities of hate speech in digital media.

Researching hate speech is challenging, not only due to the complexity of the phenomenon, but also due to the ethical issues it entails. I know that researching hateful and racist content can inadvertently recirculate the material, adding fame to the agents behind its origins (Askanius, 2020). Therefore, it is important to carefully consider how to present empirical data while emphasizing the critical analysis that illustrates how hate speech is constructed and circulated, including the sentiments, values and ideologies advanced by it.

Digital Hate Cultures

There are several ways to describe hate speech. For example, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers (1997) defines hate speech as "[covering] all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, antisemitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance" (Laaksonen et al., 2020, p. 3). Hate speech is a term often invoked for legal reasons. However, as argued by Brown (2017), it is more than a legal concept; it is also an ordinary construct used to describe "the expressive dimensions of identity-based envy, hostility, conflict, mistrust and oppression" (Brown, 2017, p. 427). As Laaksonen et al. (2020) contended, "hate speech refers to a variety of speech acts and other ill behaviour that ranges from the penal criminal acts to speech and behaviour that is uncivil and disturbing, yet tolerated" (Laaksonen et al., 2020, p. 3). Similarly, Brown (2017) argued that we need to expand the definition of hate speech so that we can grasp the multiplicity of the phenomenon and the diverse ways in which it flows around social, cultural, political, economic and technological contours.

In the European context, hate speech manifests particularly in hostility towards racialized minorities and migrants, and generally, towards women. Udupa et al. (2021) showed that cultures of hate flourish in various national contexts worldwide, often targeting ethnic, religious and sexual minorities. Pohjonen and Udupa (2017) explored hate speech in Ethiopia and India, arguing that there is a need for a more situational understanding of the cultures involved and their online practices,

which have largely been obfuscated by the overarching menace of hate speech. Likewise, Banaji and Bhat (2022) identified "the need to locate discrimination, incitement and hate speech historically within specific socio-political, economic and cultural contexts".

To help understand the multiplicity of hate speech, Ganesh (2018) used the term "digital hate culture" (p. 31) to refer to the "swarm of users that form contingent alliances to contest contemporary political culture and inject their ideology into new spaces". Although Ganesh pointed to the political groups that produce or tacitly support hateful content, digital hate culture also refers to the complex cultural practice in the digital context and therefore the use of cultures in plural appears the capture the essence of the practice more aptly. Moreover reference to cultures lends to a grassroots-oriented approach to hate speech to be investigated as a cultural practice, rather than as an object of legal evaluation.

The proliferation of hate speech is connected to the ways in which social media platforms and their algorithms propagate hateful and intolerant communication throughout society (Back, 2002; Daniels, 2018; Laaksonen et al., 2020; Matamoros–Fernandez, 2017). For example, Khosravinik and Esposito (2018) connected the rise of hate speech to the digital affordances of social media, giving us the *dark side* of digital participation. Similarly, Waisbord (2020) examined several phenomena of mob censorship and harassment in online environments.

Social media has indeed become a central forum and breeding ground for hate speech production, circulation and consumption. This structure embraces the post-deferential political climate. As defined by Mark Andrejevic, post-deferential refers to a shift in media environment where people are now able to reshape, circulate and manipulate contents on media, and even create their own truths. Post-deferential political climate according to Andrejevic (2013) is characterised by narrative multiplication and fragmentation. Digital hate cultures are particularly connected to the rise of far-right sentiments and political populism, while also nesting and drawing on various subcultures, such as the 'manosphere' , as the digitally networked community of alt-right, anti-feminist and misogyn actors (Ganesh, 2018; Bratich & Banet–Weiser, 2018; Marwick & Caplan, 2018; Knuutila et al. 2019; Vainikka, 2017; Nikunen et al., 2021). There are several elements that fuel the proliferation of hate speech in social media. The main aspects are connected to the organizing opportunities and multimodal communicative tools available.

First, social media sites provide opportunities for anyone to publish content at any time without official gatekeepers. Its participatory format has been beneficial for many marginalized groups, but it has also opened doors to hostility and harm. For producing hateful content, the opportunity to bypass traditional-media gatekeepers, and effectively distribute messages through networks of like-minded supporters and potential adherents, is essential. It creates an avenue for people to create their own versions of reality (Esser et al., 2017; Wodak, 2015).

Second, social media provides space for community building where people with similar political ideas and agendas can meet virtually and develop their ideologies while planning action

(Ekman, 2018; Khosravinik & Esposito, 2018). Like-minded people can easily work together to produce content and algorithmically connect to transnational networks and reach global audiences. Although hateful content is disallowed on many platforms in principle, vague rules and policies based on peer moderation make controlling the activity futile. Social media platform business models are designed around the role of facilitation, and unlike media outlets, they seek to avoid bearing responsibility for the content produced (Gillespie, 2018). As argued by Ganesh (2018, pp. 37), digital hate cultures "exploit the gaps of an interstitial zone" to escape regulations by adopting coded language and actions, as well as to migrate from one platform to another when necessary.

Third, instead of face-to-face communication, social media forums provide technologically mediated channels with anonymity. Hence, attacks are made easier, as technology provides distance, and anonymity offers identity protection. These factors are at least partially responsible for the increasing spread of hateful content (Ascher 2019). Algorithms and bots are increasingly used to disseminate hateful content efficiently and on-target. The machine elements of automated media, enhanced by humans and encouraged by economic incentives (Andrejevic, 2020) thus enable complex combinations of distanced yet affective forms of engagement. In other words, social media offers technological tools and their cover for dissemination of hateful attacks. At the same time the use of these tools can accelerate the intensity, scale and vulgarity of attacks – thus accumulating affect.

As the IRC-Gallery example at the beginning of this chapter suggests, social media affordances enable and bring together subcultural practices of ironic play manifested in the remix practices, speedy circulation and virality. The subcultural feel of the early internet with its harmless practices of trolling and memetic taunting collides with cold humor that defy certainty while mocking, ridiculing and humiliating. The politics of irony (Nikunen, 2015; Nagle, 2017; Prisk, 2017; Hawley, 2017) has grown wildly with digital media, especially in far-right politics that targets racialized subjects, feminists and minorities often through networked actors. Importantly, the use of irony assumes an affective community (Zink, 2019) that is capable of recognizing (i.e. 'getting') the coded content and the targets of hate as well as create a joint community around these practices (Hutcheon, 1994; Nikunen, 2015). However, although irony flavours some of the most dominant forms of hate speech, digital hate culture also seeks repertoires from more traditional nationalistic and masculine forms as we shall see in the case of Soldiers of Odin, discussed more in detail later in this chapter (Gilroy, 2019; Nikunen et al., 2021).

Temporality of Collective Affects

In her seminal book, *The cultural politics of emotions*, Sara Ahmed (2004) discussed hate as an affective force that accumulates value through circulation. Hateful racialized circulation of images and texts provides affective encounters that connect emotions with history, narratives and subjective experiences. However, affect not only operates at the individual level, it also operates collectively to "envelope and press upon life" (Anderson, 2009, p. 78). Anderson (2009) discussed affective

atmospheres as transpersonal intensities emerging as bodies affect one another to create indefinite, intensive space-times. Affective atmospheres refer to a spatial dimension, such as a social media forum, Facebook or Twitter, in which interactions are organized and shaped by the affordances of the platform. (Tucker & Goodings, 2017). Distinct groups and forums tend to establish their own affective styles over time; thus, it is possible to distinguish different affective atmospheres of melancholy, irony, shame, fear or lightness.

While the concept of affective atmosphere refers to the formation of a collective feel that is something indefinite, the research on affective publics offers more concrete examples of how emotions travel in digital space with particular intensity and how social media invites affective attunement (Papacharissi, 2015; Lünenborg, 2019). Researching the affective dimensions of online hatred reveals how emotions are experienced, managed, mobilised and geared in the context of social media and how particular emotions carry moral force. Digital affect cultures (Döveling et al., 2018; Paasonen, 2015) are open to amplification, manipulation and rebuttal to cultivate various affective canons (Whetherell, 2012). In terms of temporality, research has identified presentness, immediacy and speediness as dominant time structures (Haber, 2019; Kaun & Stiernstedt, 2014; Poell, 2020). Presentness and immediacy are manifested in the sense that there is always something going on, on social media and that the debates are evolving fast. Such immediacy can be seen in the rapidity of reactions to memes and the phase of reshaping images and memes . Yet, as Coleman (2018) points out, the affective temporality of social media is multi-layered including different rhythms and intensities but also simultaneous sense of past and future in the present (Coleman, 2018).

The concept of affective publics suggests a temporality of anticipation, a premediation that mobilises affect. This orientation towards the future is central to mediated practices of securitisation that aim to predict what comes next in everyday practices of social media use (Lupinacci, 2021). Connecting with anticipation and solidarity, affective publics are hopeful in waiting. They anticipate others to join in and accumulate new ideas, images and actions to be shared - to make things happen. However, affective publics are not only formed around progressive solidarity, as in the cases explored by Papacharissi (2015), but they also evolve into cultures of hate (Adlung et al., 2021). Affective publics are formed through immediacy and intensity and are expressed as supportive media engagements. As such, they are often short-lived assemblages, or they are built upon extant formations. The technologies and affordances of social media platforms feed anticipation through their suggestive infrastructures embedded in sharing practices. As argued by van Dijck (2013, p. 58), technological solutions ensure “frictionless sharing” across different platforms. Sharing has become the central ideology empowering social media logic (van Dijck & Poell, 2018).

As argued, digital hate cultures include a wide range of forms (e.g. memes, images, blogs, podcasts, videos, bots and emojis). These modalities are intrinsically connected to and shaped by the temporality of their travels across platforms, thus gaining affective value (Ahmed, 2004). The ease of travelling across different channels and platforms, is central to digital hate cultures. The memes are

fast-moving and draw on cultural bricolage with practices of mixing, reframing and shaping the materials at hand (Schifman, 2013: Milner, 2016; Rentschler & Thrift, 2015). Such memetic, associative and purposeful misconnections obscure contextualization while reinforcing stereotypes. Elements of visuality, brevity and velocity work against detailed contextualization; therefore, impatience is inscribed into the practice of digital sharing. This impatience, brewed in the immediacy and ease of sharing, is fundamental to the spread of hate speech.

In summary, the temporal acceleration of public debates is considered fundamental to the emergence of hate speech. Hateful postings seek to provoke and evoke anger via trolling methods that aim to confuse, disturb and destabilize communication. They engender instant affective reactions operating under the temporal regime of immediacy (Brown, 2016). However, I argue that not all hateful content on social media is created under similar temporal structures. The different formations of hate speech attach themselves to various directions, rhythms and intensities, according to their context and meaning.

In the remainder of this chapter, I offer a closer look at the formation of affective publics within different temporalities. For this, it is useful to distinguish between a hate culture that is *inward-targeted* (i.e. shared within a group of like-minded individuals and operating as ideological glue) and *outward-targeted* (i.e. manifested action and harm towards others)(Rauchfleisch and Kaiser 2020; Saresma et al. 2022). The first case focuses on inward-targeted postings of memes and images on the *Soldiers of Odin* Facebook group, whereas the second examines outward-targeted multimodal messages on Twitter and their intensity. Both cases adhere to temporal structures of acceleration and intensity, albeit in different ways, situated in the context of Finland and its rise of far-right anti-immigrant movements. I pay particular attention to the ways in which different modalities and temporalities of hate are connected to the formation of affective publics. I also explore the digital housework involved in these cases.

Methods and Materials

The empirical data in this chapter consist of 286 images and responses shared on the public Finnish *Soldiers of Odin* Facebook site. Data were collected using the Facebook Graph application programming interface. The analysed images were posted between December 2015 (when the Facebook group was founded) and February 2017. The site became inaccessible in 2020. All posts, comments, metadata and images were downloaded for analysis. The second case consists of data collected from a Twitter feed in November 2021, resulting in 104 postings under hashtags #renaz and #valtaoja. The hashtags refer to the names of the persons in the centre of a Finnish political debate of racism and use of N-word. The discussion thread includes text, images, videos and memes. The data consists only what is available. In other words, there are several posts that are removed due to moderation.

The analysis focuses on the repeated use of images, repertoires and styles and the responses that are evoked. It pays attention to the modes (genres), interactions (responses) and temporalities (intensities, rhythms) of the social media data. The affective dimensions of the interactions are analysed by identifying emotions verbalised or coded in comments and responses via exclamation marks, capital letters, emojis and named emotions. Furthermore, the analysis leverages the idea of following the 'thing' to trace different networks, connections and references using reverse image searching and hyperlinks (Marcus, 1995; Hine, 2017; Caliandro, 2018; Carah, 2014). The aim is not only to explore the desires, claims and moralities of digital hate culture, but also to connect the formation of these affective publics to the context of the digital interface, its organisation and temporal structure, as well as the digital housework it requires.

Inward-Targeted Accumulation of Hate

The first case examines images shared on *Soldiers of Odin*, an anti-immigrant street-patrol Facebook group established in Finland in 2015 in response to the so-called European refugee crisis (Chouliaraki et al., 2017; Nikunen, 2020). The stated intent was to protect citizens from the alleged threats posed by asylum seekers. The Facebook site rapidly gained nearly 50,000 followers internationally. It has subgroups in at least 13 European countries, including Sweden, Norway, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany and the UK. There are also subgroups in the US, Canada and Australia (Ekman, 2018). On the Finnish public site, images can be categorized roughly into three types: the members themselves, Viking mythological figures and immigrants. Here, I focus on the third group.

A typical example of immigrant-related images is a close-up of bearded, presumably Muslim men shouting at an organized rally or protest. Responses to the image included terms such as 'parasites', 'intruders' and 'fake'.[2] Expressions of anger and explicit verbalized emotions (e.g. 'I'm so angry') were common, as were textual codes signifying intensity, such as exclamation marks and capital letters (e.g. 'Fuck those parasites!!!!'). Anger was also verbalized regarding the desire to act by attacking and killing the people represented in the images (e.g. 'Cyanide [sic] to those in their food', 'burn them all', 'bomb them', 'call the gestapo', 'deathtoislam [sic]; missing the SS-troops'). In summary, images depicting immigrants with angry expressions seem to have affectively incited anger in the group's responses, both in Finnish and in English.

A reverse image search reveals that the image in question is commonly used by various professional news sites and on right-wing or religious websites. According to the Associated Press, the image was taken in 2010 by Khalid Tanveer in Multan, Pakistan, during a demonstration against plans to burn Qurans. Thus, the context of the image is far away from Finland and dated long before the so called refugee crisis debated on *Soldiers of Odin* site.

[2] The quotes have been translated from Finnish by the author.

Another image contained three apparently Muslim men at another demonstration, tagged with @fakeposters, signifying a freelance group of graphic artists with their own Facebook and Twitter channels. The added top-text to the image read, 'WE WILL RAPE YOU!', followed by smaller bottom-text, 'we will rape your sons and daughters, we are poor refugees, you will allow it'. A reverse image search suggested that the original image by the EPA news agency is connected to the Muslim Brotherhood, a movement in the Middle East. Their existence is considered illegal in several countries today. However, the true origin of the image still remains unclear, and its connection to the Muslim Brotherhood lacks veracity. On the Al-Jazeera news site, the photo was found with the caption, "Protestors shout anti-government slogans in February 2011".[3] Like the first image discussed, the picture seems to lack any connection to refugees in Finland.

Several memes contrasted two images with captions that referred to allegedly genuine refugees (e.g. images of severely malnourished children) against ones that were claimed to be fake (e.g. young, happy-looking man in his 20s). They also staged poor Finns needing state support against asylum seekers who camp in reception centres. This was propagated in memes using opposing images of small food portions (captioned 'for the elderly') and a refugee eating a hearty meal (captioned 'lunch at the reception centre'). Responses to these memes included expressions of emotions in swearwords, slurs and exaggerated spelling such as [grammar and spelling not corrected] 'This if anything in Finland ppisssseesssmeofffff', 'This nxxxxer has such a fistfriendly face', 'My words exactly' and 'My knuckles are itching'.

This back-and-forth exchange illustrates the power of the provocation produced by the digital bricolage of memes and the intentional practices of mixing and reframing contexts to create powerful affects (Schifman, 2013; Rentschler & Thrift, 2015; Askanius, 2020; Hokka & Nelimarkka, 2020). The actual contexts are irrelevant as the images serve as a general sign of every Muslim man and every asylum seeker, without any real, detailed referent – and as demonstrated, the reference of the images is indeed lost. The repetitious circulation inherent in the nature of these memes draws upon stereotypical ideas of the dangerous, dishonest strangers, that has also been the recurring trope in media coverage of the so called refugee crises in Europe (Oboler, 2016; van Dijk, 1991; Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2016). Several similar images form a larger imaginary and a collective understanding of threat. In this way then the images serve the purpose of the *Soldiers of Odin* group, as protectors and defenders against the enemy they have established (Saresma, 2017).

Affective temporality manifests in short, sometimes single-word responses, enhanced by exclamation marks and capital letters. The responses rapidly appear one after the other while propagating to other networks with suggested hyperlinks to news sites or YouTube videos. The tempo of the responses slows occasionally when outsiders attempt to properly contextualize or argue against fear-mongering memes. Such mitigation, however, is scarce in the abundance of the affective anger

[3] https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2013/4/7/jordans-muslim-brotherhood-goes-live-to-air

present on such networks. While there are 'outsiders' on the site and traffic that links to other far right sites, the communication is predominantly targeted to the like-minded members of the group. This becomes evident in the lack of reasoning of shared images and memes as well as in the abundance of mutual backslapping in the form of emojis and verbal consensus. Moreover, the shared images of the members themselves posing as a group fortify the sense of affective community.

Reactions operate as affective support and formation of the ideology of *Soldier of Odin*. Both memes and their responses direct the interpretative frames and formation of the atmosphere. Targeted inward, to other members of the group, each response operates as a fortifying echo of congruity, solidifying the group and its mission.

Their affective force is in the anticipation of danger. The angry, furious responses evidence to the danger and threat, while the ironic memes seek to ridicule the dangerous Other. In other words, the constituting of an atmosphere of threat that the angry responses clearly attest are accompanied by ironic laughter (Grusin, 2010).

The temporality of the *Soldiers of Odin* site operates through anticipatory practices that accumulate the sense of hate. The dynamic moves from outside in, as members collect materials from news and other external sources, and bring them to be remixed and shared together in ways that solidify the group and strengthen the grounds of their own culture of hate.

Outward-Targeted Expansion of Hate

The second case explores outward-targeted hate speech as an example of surging affective publics and the variety of genres adopted on social media. This is a case of a public debate on racism evoked by a Finnish television talk show on public service media (YLE) channel in November 2021. An established white male astronomer, Esko Valtaoja, was invited to debate with a female music journalist and an activist of color, Renaz Ebrahimi on the current affairs talk show Sannikka that often carries a provocative edge. Ebrahimi was highly critical of the setting and strongly criticized Valtaoja for using 'n-word' on the show. Valtaoja explained in the show how the offensive meaning of the n-word is contextual and gave explicit examples of its use by also legitimizing its use in a historical context. Ebrahimi responded by expressing that the setting of the show made her feel unsafe. This excerpt from the show went viral on social media, and a secondary Twitter discussion evaluated the performances of the two participants. Many users described Valtaoja as rational, composed and wise, whereas Ebrahimi was described as badly behaved, aggressive and hateful. The debate deployed gendered understandings of male rationality versus female emotionality, also in the use of hashtags with his surname and her first name. Some participants supported Ebrahimi's stand and questioned the expert role of an astronomer in a debate on racism. However, the debate quickly moved from a generally structured argument to vile, personal commentary. In the beginning of the Twitter thread under hashtag #renaz and #valtaoja there were several comments supporting Ebrahimi's reactions in the show but gradually these views abated and the feed became dominated by

comments that criticized and scorned Ebrahimi and her claims of not feeling safe. The affective tone shifted from intense debate to ironic mockery and malice bringing together people with similar views, from different other platforms and forums, such as the right-wing populist Homma platform, Facebook-groups and YouTube channels. With likes and cross-referenced hyperlinks participants formed an alliance, a mob, that seeked to target Ebrahimi with postings that were directed and tagged to her, naming her as 'disgusting', 'embarrassing', 'fucked-up', 'monster', 'crazy fanatic', 'stupid', 'dangerous', and a 'horrible person'. This public targeting qualifies as mob harassment (Waisbord, 2020).

The debate extended to other forums as a founding member of the Finnish anti-immigrant forum, *Homma*, posted a video from Ebrahimi's DJ gig from the previous year, where she played and sang alongside rap lyrics that included the 'n-word'. The purpose was to expose Ebrahimi's alleged hypocrisy, s she was using the n-word herself and the clip quickly spread. Cartoonish memes were then circulated, shared and framed (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013; Pöyhtäri et al., 2019; Chadwick, 2013). The clip quickly found its way to YouTube channels hosted by right-wing microcelebrities. As argued by Lewis (2018), microcelebrity tactics emphasize relatability and authenticity with their audiences, often resorting to sensationalism, attention-seeking and shaming in their productions. In the case of far-right microcelebrities particularly, the relationship is built upon intimacy and authenticity, whereas the mode of address seeks attention, controversy and scandal. The microcelebrity video culture builds connections through practices in which hosts visit or watch each other's shows online, as well as through live on-screen viewer commentary. Rauchfleisch and Kaiser (2020) argued that this behaviour is a prime example of what Papacharissi (2015) called 'affective publics'. On the Finnish right-wing populist YouTube channel, *EskoTV*, the host and a guest (another YouTuber who performs sport commentary), reprimanded Ebrahimi's behaviour, garnering 2821 views.

Ekman (2014) reported the emergence of YouTube video activism strategies in mobilising right-wing groups, noting that microcelebrity videos capitalise on the affordances of the social media platform to facilitate and amplify public debate as an alternative to one-way news-reporting media (Ekman, 2014). Laaksonen, Pantti and Titley (2020) researched Finnish anti-immigrant activism and identified three overlapping but persistent communicative strategies: movement-building, controversy-building and personal branding. Video genres include live streaming, vlogs, re-cuts (i.e. response videos; Lewis, 2018), reframed content and compilations (Laaksonen, Pantti & Titley, 2020) to arouse controversy. The clips of Ebrahimi's debate and DJ gig illustrate affective media practices in their the use of platforms to attack, ridicule and shame. This course of events presents how digital hate cultures operate and adapt to new forms and genres (Titley, 2019) via cultural bricolage of the internet and the logistics of extant networks that give surge to new scandals and mob harassments (Waisbord, 2020).

Compared with the first case (i.e. *Soldiers of Odin*), the second (i.e. Valtaoja and Ebrahimi) offers more conflictual affective attunements of controversy and debate, whereas in the first, the hateful postings were geared more towards solidifying the group's base and ideology. Solidification is also present in the second, and it fortified the relational bonds of like-minded participants. In terms of the temporality of hate, hate speech is shared in different rhythms and intensities. While the first case presents a gradually growing online community of the like-minded enhanced by continuously shared affective hateful contents, the second case illustrates a surge of affective publics and the ways in which it stretches and extends to different forums and genres. The temporality of the second case adheres to intensive immediacy that is enhanced with technological tools to link and share. In terms of creating scandals, such temporality of speed is essential as it creates sense of intensity and anticipation of something that is about to happen next (Papacharissi 2015).

Rauchfleisch and Kaiser (2020) argued that far-right inward-oriented communication is characterized by radical, racist language, while outward-oriented communication operates on public forums and spreads to wider audiences. Yet, outward-oriented communication is not necessarily more moderate in tone, as Rauchfleisch and Kaiser claim (2020). In this case study, the outward targeted messages seem to be conflictual and designed to mobilise mob harassment.

Digital Housework of Hate

While hate speech seems to travel easily and swiftly across the platforms, it also involves practices of moderation that seek to calm and slow down the circulation of hate, yet often seems to fail. As argued by Kalsnes and Ihlebaek (2021), moderation has become more important as online harassment and hate speech have become more usual. Shifting the gaze to moderation enables us to see that hate speech is not just symbolic signs; it is also treated as material content, a waste, that should be removed from platforms. The implied house-cleaning requires moderators, either humans or machines. Moderation services are often outsourced or delegated to low-paid individuals (Roberts, 2019; Gray & Suri, 2020). Roberts (2019) estimated that there were some 100 000 content moderators worldwide, and that they made very little money via short-term contracts or freelancing agreements. Jarrett (2016) used the term 'digital housewife', to render a gendered connection to unpaid social reproduction and housework that enables the capitalist accumulation of profit for others. According to some estimates, moderators often have around 20 s to make decisions about new content, making the job far from easy (Siapera, 2022). Simultaneously, purveyors of hate speech tend to routinely develop new ways of denigrating or attacking minoritized groups while evading platform standards (Jereza, 2021). Additionally, as revealed by Roberts (2019), moderators are dealing with highly affective contents, routinely exposed to violent and hateful content that creates hazardous psychological working conditions. Although machine-learning promises to overtake many monotonous human-centred activities, "[It] introduces further opacity into moderation decisions, because the ways in

which algorithms work are neither clear nor accountable" as argued by Siapera (2022, pp. 60) based on the work by Gorwa et al. (2020).

Ostensibly, forum moderation practices are entangeled with platforms' affordances and lack of transparency. Motivations behind moderation are not always clear as the practice also involves invisibility. This is manifested in actions that are not explained to the public. Notably, in the second case of this chapter, several comments were removed without explanation (Matamoros–Fernandez, 2017), making it difficult to analyse the cause or motivations of moderation. Twitter applies a mechanism by which comments detected to include strong views are temporarily hidden so that readers must choose to reveal its content. Interestingly, the warning notice provided by Twitter for this purpose may be an invitation to some, allowing faster access to highly affective content. These type of moderation practices not only blur the motivations of moderation but may also render hateful content as affectively lucrative.

The other case, the *Soldiers of Odin* site, simply disappeared (or became inaccessible) from Facebook. In 2020 Facebook announced that they were cracking down on far-right extremist groups, but there is no evidence that the *Soldiers of Odin* site was included. While these mechanisms above seem to hide part of the hate speech, they also add to non-transparency of the policies around hate speech. It is not clear if the platforms actually condemn the contents, or simply wish to subdue their visibility.

Additionally, some contents, such as ironic memes, may be simply too complicated to be decided on quickly. Otherwise, moderation practices often appear purposefully ineffective, resulting in traffic and advertisement revenue continuing to churn.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to explore the modalities and temporalities of digital hate culture in the context of the Finnish right-wing anti-immigrant movement. The case studies showed how expressions of hate often sit in the borderline of irony and cruelty, colonising new media modalities, while also engendering occasional resistance and moderation.

This chapter shed light on the ways in which social media groups share and produce affective atmospheres through hate speech and the ways in which affects are encouraged and mobilized in the formation of affective publics. The two cases presented seem to have adhered to the temporality of immediacy and anticipation, but their dynamics were different. The first case illustrated a compliant atmosphere of like-minded individuals. The dynamics were based on a movement from outside in, bringing materials from external sources to be remixed and shared together on social media. Their hateful images and memes were intended to invoke a shared hatred, resulting in group camaraderie and ideology sharing and reinforcement. The temporality was tuned towards the anticipation of danger and ironic laughter. The second case operated by expanding hate speech to different modalities and platforms. The tone of the debate in the second case was more conflictual, characterized by the anticipation of conflict and a preparedness to mobilise mob harassment. Both cases illustrate the surge

of affective publics and the ways in which messages travel rapidly across platforms and forums. Importantly, the adoption of different media formats(e.g. memes, cartoons and videos) is essential to the circulation of hate speech. In this way digital hate culture assumes new logistical tools that are used to conquer new frontiers of the digital media.

This chapter further discussed the ways in which hateful affective practices are materially and intrinsically connected to digital infrastructures, social media affordances and platform policies. Exploring hate speech from this perspective helps us understand how it is engineered and encouraged by the algorithmic suggestive infrastructure. Moderation of hate speech requires increasing amounts of "digital housework". Instead of being transparent, platform policies add to obscurity and non-transparency of the policies around hate speech. Furthermore, the different modalities of hate speech help purveyors escape detection. Even if moderation practices may slow down and break some threads and sites, it seems to be impossible to completely slow down the circulation of hate in its multiple and constantly transforming modes.

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