Findings

The biggest twitter influencers in this analysis were calculated by the amount of retweets their posts were generating. When this approach was initially used, in a single hour of the data (Assignment 2), the biggest influencers were pro-Brexit and the top ones owned recently created accounts, thus hinting that the Leave campaign on Twitter was stronger than the Remain counterpart.

After running the same analysis on all the hours before and during the referendum, we could not only validate the previous assumption, but most importantly, after associating respective hashtags and looking at the content of the retweets, we uncovered that many influential accounts were sharing messages of extreme positions, thus polarising people. One of these accounts even reached the top ten on the referendum date.

Conclusion

As a group, our intention was to create a visualisation that answered to the questions posed by the data holders, but also to make it perceptible to a wider audience. In that sense, we were happy with the result obtained.

After combining our individual explorations from Assignment 2, we could verify that the majority of our assumptions were effectively confirmed. Regardless of the origin of the accounts, we can now confirm that the majority of Twitter was indeed pro-Brexit. Such findings demonstrate the influence of social media on the general public, and how its importance cannot be disregarded as a valid representation of public perceptions. The biggest challenge of our investigation was that we could not gather an accurate location for all the users, and the ones that had it were self-determined. Should we have had such information, we would have been able to determine which accounts were bots created to undermine people’s views, and their overall impact. Without such information, we could only hypothesise about it.

In regards to this project, our next steps would be to fix the aforementioned problems during the development stage, but also to compare the activity of the biggest influencers accounts’, and how (in)active they are a year later.

Finally, we would like to liaise with the data holders, present them our findings, and hopefully generate new insights with their previous knowledge.