



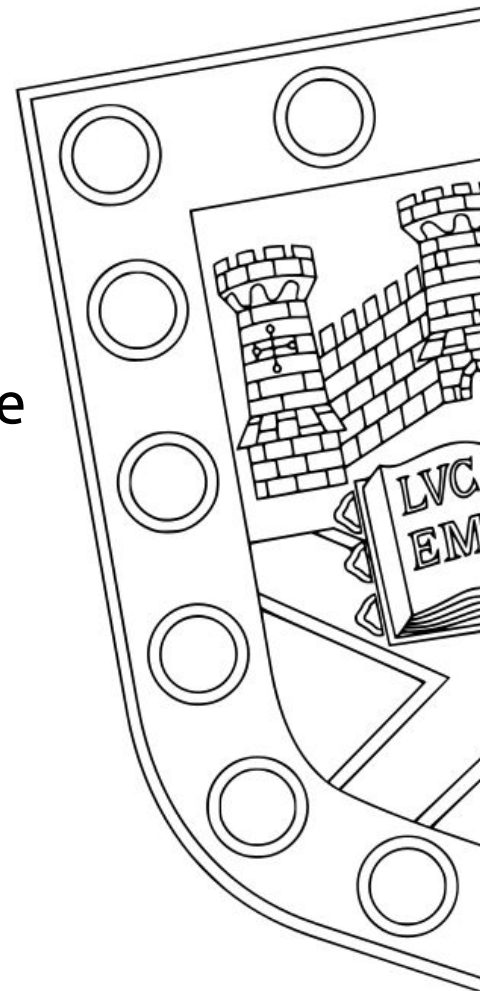
Information flows, intermedia agenda setting, and
the role of the BBC in the UK's coronavirus coverage

<https://www.brexitandbelonging.org/blog>

Laszlo Horvath, Susan Banducci, Katharine Tyler

L.Horvath@exeter.ac.uk

NECO Workshop 2020, 8 June 2020



Who we are & What we are working on

Identity, Belonging, and the Role of the Media in Brexit Britain

BrexitAndBelonging.org

2018--2020

Identity, Inequality, and the Media in Brexit-COVID-19 Britain

2020--2021




Ethnographers: Katharine Tyler (PI, Exeter), Cathrine Degnen (Newcastle), Josh Blamire (Exeter)

Media team: Susan Banducci, Dan Stevens, Travis Coan, Laszlo Horvath (Exeter)

Who we are & What we are working on

Combining large-scale media mapping and text as data tools with ethnographic data to understand how citizens interact with traditional and social media in practice.

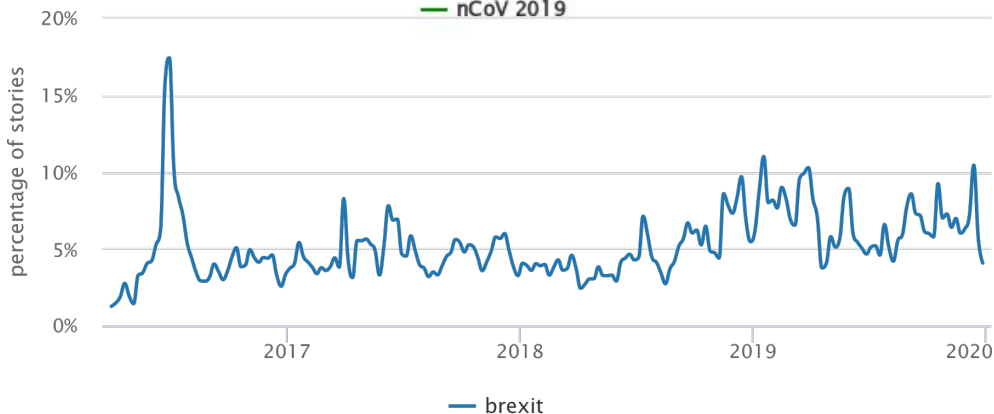
Who we are & What we are working on

	ETHNOGRAPHY	MEDIA DATA
BREXIT		
COVID		(some)

News-saturated crisis moments: Brexit and Covid



Data: MediaCloud, pct averaged over weeks.
Day record on 19 March 2020:
79.98% of all UK news about the coronavirus



Data: MediaCloud, pct averaged over months.
Day record on 24 June 2016:
37.93% of all UK news about Brexit

Two questions about the information environment

How do citizens manage the overabundance of information during crisis moments?

Today: preliminary results on covid-19 news sharing

Agenda diversity: What is being covered in the media and who sets the coronavirus news agenda?

Today: first results on covid "agenda building" networks

Theoretical considerations 1

People may have limited access to quality information.

"Post-Broadcast Democracy" (Prior 2014)

Increasing choice and range of media -> decreasing political engagement and knowledge of current affairs.

But: "...the populations of countries with public service broad- and narrowcasting are better informed about government and politics, are more trusting of other people, have more positive civic attitudes, have greater confidence in democratic institutions and are more likely to engage in democratic politics." (Newton 2015)

News seeking during crisis?

The Telegraph

Television has suddenly become a shared experience once again

For years, satellite and streaming have fragmented TV-watching – but that's all changed, says Ben Lawrence



Theoretical considerations 2

People may access misleading information.

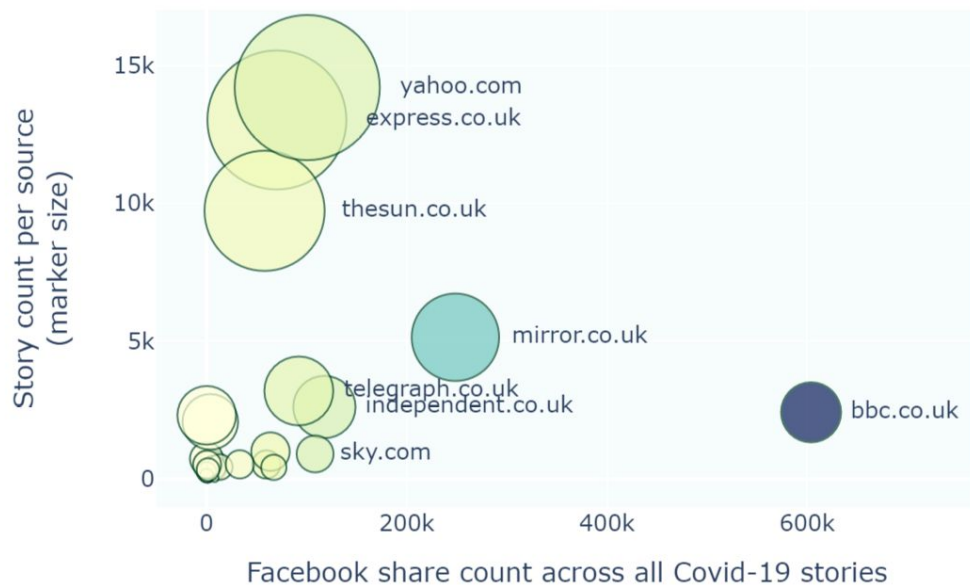
Both crisis moments described with misleading content that fails to stand to fact-checking e.g. covid-19 treatments, EU immigration costs to NHS

But: [1] limited evidence of large-scale *exposure* (Lazer et al 2018) [2] some evidence exist that exposure "does not crowd out *consumption of other hard news*" (Guess 2020) and [3] exposure \neq *endorsement*

Beyond exposure: News sharing

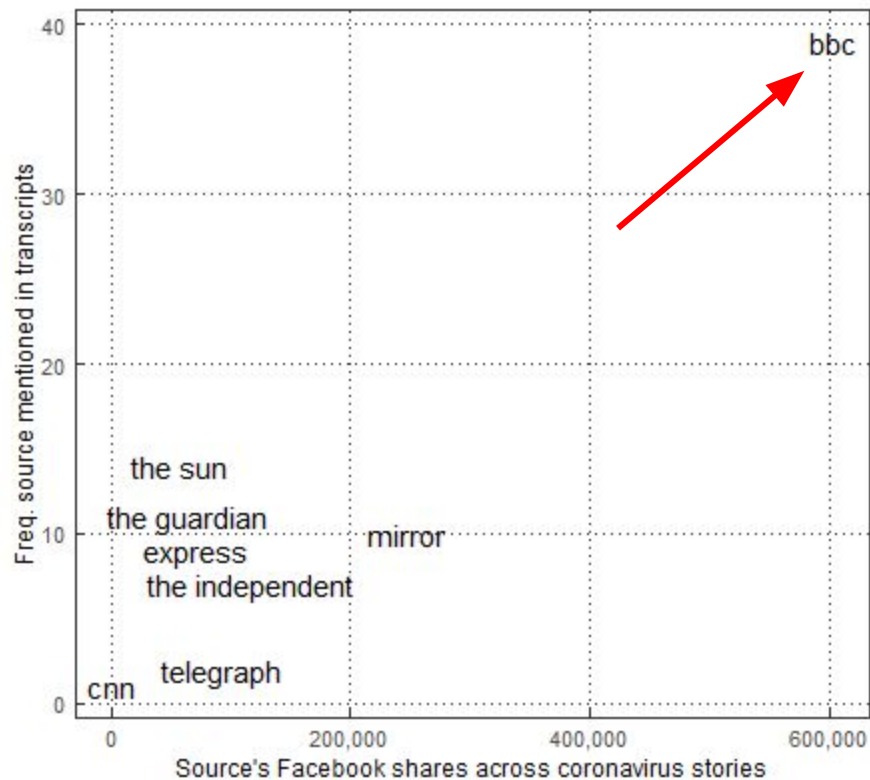
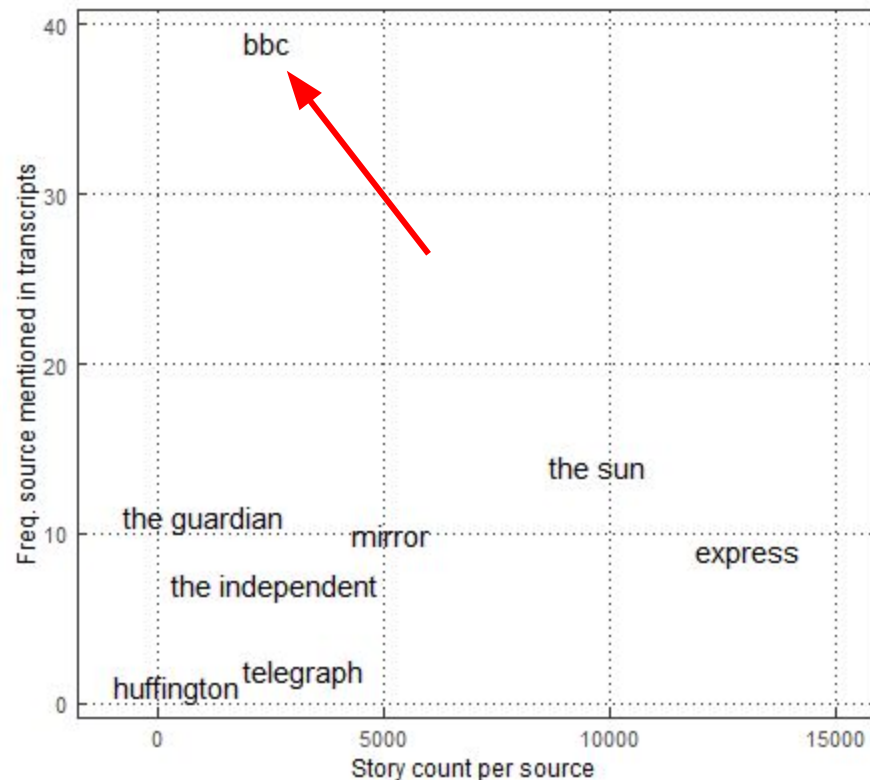
Social media sharing an indication that the source is trusted (American Press Institute 2017) but important alternative mechanisms (e.g. express identity)

Covid-19 online news coverage (UK). Data: Webhose



domain	fbShares
bbc.co.uk	603958
mirror.co.uk	248627
independent.co.uk	117773
sky.com	108488
yahoo.com	100610
telegraph.co.uk	92221
express.co.uk	70306
www.gov.uk	67208
theguardian.com	63909
metro.co.uk	59845
thesun.co.uk	58017
wnd.com	33248
huffingtonpost.co.uk	13233

A first stab at mapping media data (x) to ethnography data (y)



News sharing in fieldwork data (Brexit research)

Different reasons for sharing, for example sharing misinformation on social media as "symbolic" of broader claims and problems

BBC in fieldwork data (Brexit research)

In this regard, people on both sides of the Brexit debate argued that the same BBC programmes were **politically biased**.

For example, BBC1's Question Time and Radio 4's the Today Programme were thought by both leavers and remainers to be biased towards the side they did not support.

Implications for Covid fieldwork (upcoming)

This marked mood of distrust of the BBC during the Brexit crisis renders the current return to the BBC as the most trusted source during this time of lockdown very significant.

Preliminary conclusions

The BBC represents an opportunity for a shared news experience by the public,

But it's unclear how the public resolves the tensions that emerged during Brexit

"critical citizens?" (Norris 1999) Support for and trust in institution remains but think critically about content in terms of own motivations.

Methods: further coding news source mentions in qualitative transcripts e.g. sentiment

Agenda setting: theoretical considerations

Predominant finding: newspaper agenda influences television news more than vice versa both in the US and elsewhere (Vliegenthart and Walgrave 2008)

Earlier during UK's GE2015 campaign we found limited evidence for the BBC to set the media agenda (Banducci et al 2018)

Measures

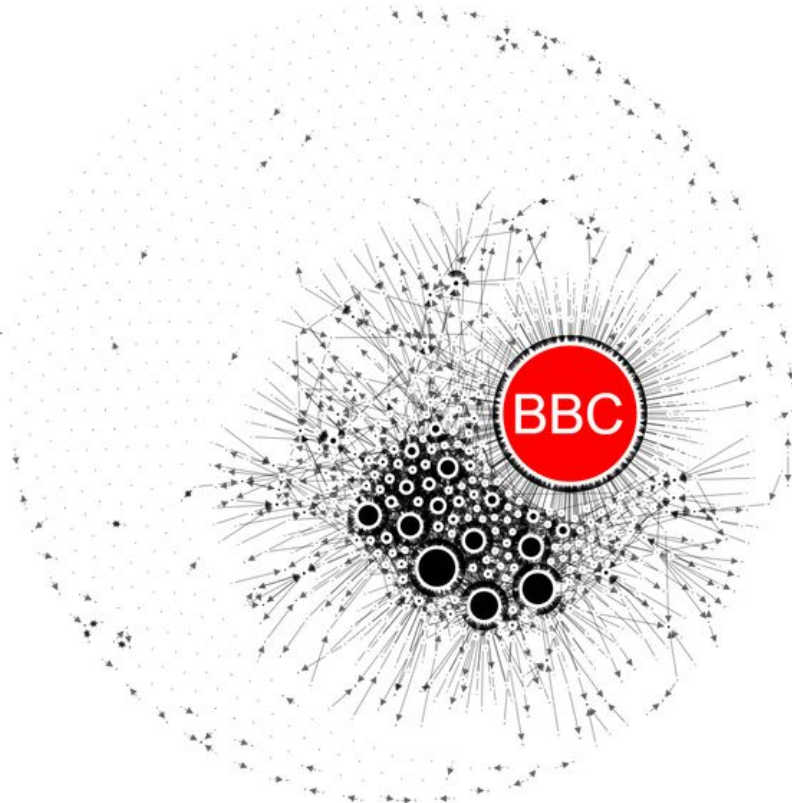
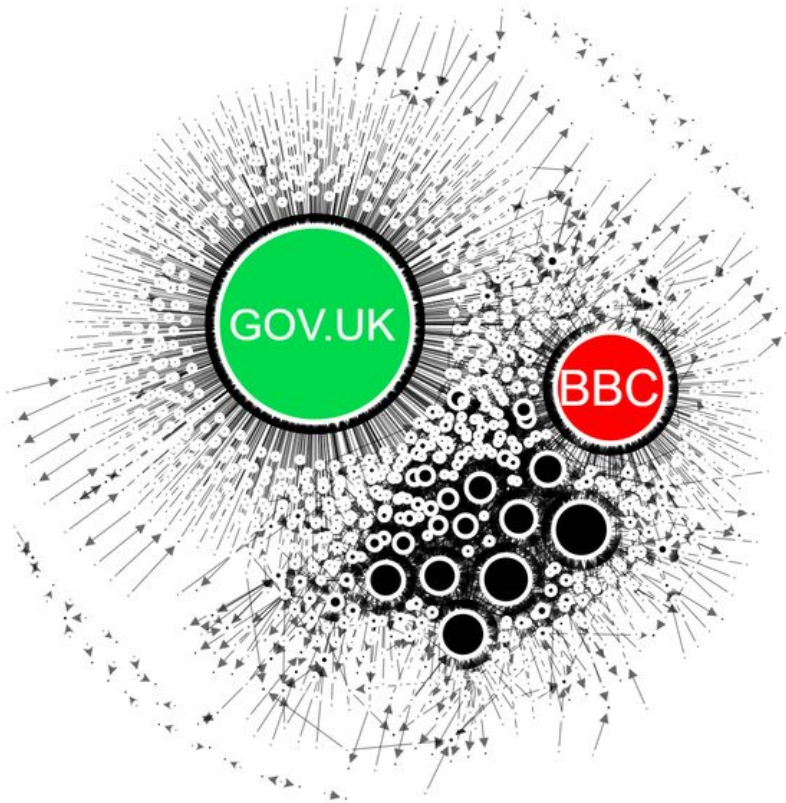
Time series-based (e.g. topics, leader-tone, Granger causality)

"Impulse-response functions"

Hyperlink networks.

Agenda building: link as evidence of use of source

Hyperlink networks



Agenda building: preliminary conclusions

During the covid crisis: UK Government's health communication leads the agenda

But the BBC is used as a source by other media and information websites

Thank you!

L.Horvath@exeter.ac.uk