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## **Platforms and Activism: Sharing ‘My Make it Possible Story’ Narratives**

A paper submitted for publication in the proceedings of the Australian and New Zealand Communication Association Annual Conference, Swinburne University, Victoria 9-11 July, 2014.

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## **Abstract**

Although livestock welfare issues were once barely visible to mainstream consumers, animal welfare activists now combine traditional public media advocacy with various media platforms to spread their campaign message as widely as possible. For instance, Animals Australia's 'Make it Possible Campaign' has used billboards, print media, television, radio, YouTube, Facebook, blogs, website stories, and Twitter to make livestock welfare issues visible to consumers. Such variety of platforms make it possible for animal activist groups such as Animals Australia to not only hail and mobilise consumers in a way that was not possible previously, but also to attract supporters, advertise their campaigns, and raise awareness of issues in the broader community on a grander scale than in the past. Activists activate multi-platforms as a way of promoting subsequent collective awareness and action, and bringing about both social and legal reform. The focus of this paper is on the mobilising of personal stories uploaded into the 'My Make it Possible Story' website. Content analysis of these stories will be overlaid with analysis of the timings of story uploading and their relation to other media activity carried out by Animals Australia will be examined. Attention will also be paid to the occurrence of what we term 'media spikes', where these spikes describe significant increases in public engagement with Animals Australia's re-framing and re-posting of mainstream news items on their various websites, Facebook and Twitter. For instance, the highest number of stories posted in the 'My Make it Possible Story' website, on 21 October 2013 (1,065), coincides with several media spikes encompassing multiple media domains. Our examination of Animals Australia's 'My Make it Possible Story' website demonstrates the kind of results activists can achieve using platforms such Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. We make the case that such activation of multiple platforms promotes engagement and participation through facilitating affective communicative investments and exchanges, a form of exchange fundamental, we argue, to the success of calls for social change and the reshaping of citizen and consumer attitudes. This paper is part of a larger project in which we record and analyse how animal welfare issues are conceived, articulated and argued within the public domain.

## **Platforms and Activism: Sharing ‘My Make it Possible Story’ Narratives**

**Debbie Rodan and Jane Mummery**

### **Introduction**

Although livestock welfare issues were once barely visible to mainstream consumers (Bagaric & Akers 2012; Munro 2004), animal welfare activists now combine traditional public media advocacy with various media platforms to spread their campaign message as widely as possible. In this way animal activist groups have the potential to attract and integrate support, advertise their campaigns, and raise awareness of issues in the broader community on a grander scale than in the past. For instance, peak animal welfare organisation Animals Australia’s ‘Make it Possible’ campaign has used interconnected combinations of print media, television, radio, website stories, and social media to bring livestock welfare issues into prominence for mainstream consumers. Such variety of platforms arguably makes it possible for animal activist groups such as Animals Australia to hail and mobilise consumers in a way that was not possible previously. Specifically we contend that their activation of multiple platforms can generate what can be called a media circuit (Lange 2008; Pennacchia Punzi 2007) able to promote subsequent collective awareness and action, and thereby facilitate both social and legal reform.

The focus of this paper is on the mobilising of personal affectively driven stories uploaded by individuals into the ‘My Make it Possible Story’ website. Of particular interest are the ways in which respondents – through sharing their feelings, anecdotes and personal stories – are interpellated into the animal welfare movement. These shared stories will be considered alongside other media activity carried out by Animals Australia, with this activity in total being examined as to its potential both to form a media circuit and to interconnect Animals Australia’s audience into an activist community. Attention will be paid to the occurrence of what we term ‘media spikes’, where these spikes describe significant increases in public engagement with Animals Australia’s presentation of content. We make the case that Animals Australia’s activation of multiple platforms promotes engagement and participation through facilitating affective communicative investments and exchanges, a form of exchange fundamental, we argue, to the success of calls for social change and the reshaping of citizen and consumer attitudes.

## **‘Make it Possible’: An Animals Australia Campaign Targeting Factory Farming**

The ‘Make it Possible’ campaign message has remained cogent and consistent since the campaign’s launch in October 2012: factory farming is a major cause of animal cruelty; all factory farmed animals experience a life of intolerable and unnecessary suffering; and each of us can and should work to end the factory farming of animals. As Animals Australia campaign director Lyn White (2013) stated in *Landline*:

our vision, our work is towards ensuring that all animals ... especially in human care, have protection from cruel treatment and are treated with compassion and respect. That is what we work towards on a daily basis.

As Animals Australia’s communication director Lisa Chalk also puts it:

The goal of ‘Make it Possible’ is one we believe all can agree with, that animals raised for food should have quality of life and protection from cruel treatment. (Cited in Sampson 2013b)

Addressing mainstream consumers, the campaign has utilised multiple modes of communication: billboards, print, television and radio advertisements and campaign coverage, websites, and social media such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and SMS alerts. The campaign has been covered in *Woman’s Day*, *Daily Telegraph*, *The Sunday Telegraph*, *Herald Sun*, *The Age*, *The Australian*, *The Guardian*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Courier Mail*, *Adelaide Now*, as well as by various news sites and programs including *The Weekly Times* (news.com.au), Yahoo news, Channel 10 News, ABC News, *ABC Online*, *Landline*, *Lateline*, *Sunrise*, and *The Project*.

The campaign has also been discussed extensively on a range of social media sites. For instance, the short-lived (May to June 2013) campaign strategy negotiated between Animals Australia and Coles – Coles was to demonstrate their commitment to the campaign by stocking campaign specific shopping bags – generated sustained attention, both positive and negative, on a variety of social media sites. These included blog sites such as: the Australian Farm Institute, *Queensland Country Life*, *Beef Central*, *Farming Ahead*, *Vegetarian Review*, *Diary of an Accidental Vegetarian*, *The Land*, *Stockland*, *Stock Journal*, *Farm Weekly*, *FarmOnline*, and *The Conversation*. Attention was also noted on the Facebook sites for Animals Australia, Coles, the National Farmers Federation (NFF), and Farmers 4 Animal Welfare; as well as on the Twitter sites for Animals Australia, Coles and the NFF. Being distributed and discussed so broadly suggests the message has reached a high proportion of

Australia's mainstream consumers as well as the self-identified and interested cohort of animal activists and those already sympathetic to their aims.

Importantly, the 'Make it Possible' campaign is arguably explicitly aimed at generating affect, to engage and produce emotional responses and action in those exposed to the campaign message. Defined here as the emotional typically fleeting gut-level response one has upon exposure (visual, auditory, etc.) to something, affect is however not simply a private matter belonging to an individual. Indeed, as Ahmed explains, 'affect does not reside in an object or sign, but is an effect of the circulation between objects and signs' (2004, p. 120). Affect does things; it aligns bodily space with social space, binding individuals into community. So understood, affect constitutes and charges the insides and outsides of collectivities, marking and maintaining the borders that mark some emotionally determined difference. Given this capacity, activist and social movement campaigns generally strive to be 'affectively charged' so as to gain recognition and build momentum around issues (Kuntsman 2012, p. 7).<sup>i</sup>

More specifically, affect can be productively considered as playing a role in what Snow and Bedford have called 'motivational framing', the 'elaborate call to arms or a *rationale for action*' that facilitates the actual mobilisation of people (1988, p. 202; cf. Collins 2001; Jasper 2011, 1998; Rodan & Mummery 2013). Here a core strategy is the generation of 'moral shock', the situation 'when an event or situation raises such a sense of outrage in people that they become inclined toward political action' (Jasper & Poulsen 1995, p. 498; cf. Jasper & Nelkin 1992; Jasper 1998). Importantly, as Jasper and Poulsen also note, 'moral shocks can serve as the functional equivalent of social networks' – they draw people into activism and into community 'by building on their existing beliefs' (1995, p. 498). The generation of moral shock – and of subsequent affective charging – is a core strategy in the 'Make it Possible' campaign, as is common in the animal welfare and animal rights movements (see Lowe 2006; Munro 1997; Nabi 2009; Rodan & Mummery 2013; Wrenn 2013). Through the facilitation of moral shock, viewers are interpellated – affectively charged – throughout the campaign to a) identify emotionally with factory farmed animals' experiences and lives, and b) act upon that identification, specifically to identify with and act in accordance with the political aims of the animal welfare movement, and to thereby begin to consider themselves part of a broader more humane activist community.

## **Data Collection**

To analyse the potential effects of the shared ‘My Make it Possible Stories’ and Animals Australia’s broader social media use, we began by collating stories posted from the inception date of the subsidiary campaign, 21 October 2013. As the number of posts started to decrease after about three months we ceased collection in January 2014. Overall we collected more than 2,200 posts from the Animals Australia ‘My Make it Possible’ website.

These stories became the basis for a content analysis. Content analysis highlights and describes ‘language-in-use’ (little ‘d’ discourse) and other elements such as values, symbols, tools and thinking styles (capital ‘D’ discourse) (Gee 2010, p. 34). As a research technique it enables researchers to make ‘valid inferences from texts to the context of their use’ (Krippendorff 2004, p. 18). In particular, it allows for the identification of recurring patterns in bodies of data (Krippendorff 2013). In this instance, patterns were identified and recorded with regards to the respondents’ use of feeling words, insofar as such words can be considered one way individuals testify to their emotions and to their ‘felt judgements’ (Dixon, cited in Lemmings & Brooks 2014, p. 3).<sup>ii</sup> Because visual images are ‘powerful and seductive in their own right’ (Rose 2001, p. 10), we also examined the photographs uploaded by respondents, recording both the types of animals included in the photograph and the number of posters who did not include a photograph. Finally posts were examined to identify core narrative themes, themes that would arguably suggest the self-selection of respondents into specific communities with particular advocacy objectives.

A survey of all the publicly available Animals Australia websites and subsidiary social media platforms was also conducted. Our aim here was to find out if mainstream media stories triggered media spikes during peak ‘My Make it Possible Story’ uploads. As such we examined all the Animals Australia websites and social media platforms, trawling for references to mainstream media stories.

### **‘My Make it Possible Story’: Personal Narratives and the Mobilising of Affect**

Your story is powerful! Share it with us and help inspire the whole country to make a world without factory farming possible. Your story might even feature in our next national radio ad! (Animals Australia n.d., My Make it Possible Story)

In October 2013 – one year after the launch of the ‘Make it Possible’ campaign – Animals Australia added a subsidiary option into their website, an option for people to share their

personal ‘My Make it Possible Story’ (Animals Australia n.d.). Here viewers were asked two questions, both directly targeting affective responses: ‘How did you feel when you discovered that most eggs, poultry and pork products come from animals in factory farms?’ and ‘How has becoming informed changed your life?’ In responding to these questions viewers could also choose whether to make their responses public (their given name and state would be displayed with their responses). Available on the Animals Australia website (if made public), responses were also used by Animals Australia to make a nationally broadcast radio advertisement.<sup>iii</sup>

As Lemmings and Brooks (2014) note, these kinds of ‘affective displays’ and their sharing are an effective mechanism for constituting communal bonds and a sense of community (2014, p. 130). Indeed, as many activists recognise, affective display is an essential tactic for the mobilising and influencing of public attitudes (Joy 2008; Munro 2005, 2004, 1997). Here, in asking viewers to explicitly post about their feelings, Animals Australia invites individuals to identify with the suffering of animals affected by factory farm practices as well as with the political goals of the animal welfare community. Viewers can also read other respondents’ personal stories before writing and submitting their own; thus the site potentially draws new respondents into expressions of community feeling.

Uploaded stories can be considered testimonials of personal feelings and action as well as providing a snapshot of a forming community’s attitudes towards animal welfare. In Jasper’s words, such stories arguably express and interconnect respondents’ ‘political identities and moral visions’ with regard to animal welfare (1997, p. 237). Given the campaign’s aims of alerting consumers to an ‘animal welfare disaster of a magnitude this planet has never known’ – of assuming they do not know of the ‘terrible price’ paid by animals from consumer demand for cheap animal products<sup>iv</sup> – and of generating moral shock and affective charging, preliminary content analysis of uploaded responses unsurprisingly revealed a plethora of negatively inflected feelings words. In total, 40 feelings words were used by posters, with the top seven feelings most often cited by respondents being: sickness, horror, disgust, anger, sadness, shock, and being brought to tears. Respondents typically also noted an intention to change their shopping and consumption practices now that they were alerted to the welfare situation of the animals providing the bulk of Australian poultry and pork products.



Lily: Shocked, upset and horrified. I had no idea this was happening and have now made a permanent change to free range everything. (21 October 2013)

Tracey: I was absolutely heart broken when I saw those first images of Australian pigs ... these large glorious animals trapped in those tiny cages!!! I had no idea! It never occurred to me that we would allow, by law, such cruelty to any animal. (22 October 2013)

Tahnee: I'm just a kid and I can't help much but I was so angry and horrified and to think all those innocent animals are treated this way I went to donate some money straight away keep up your good work. (21 October 2013)

Given the stories option was subsidiary to the campaign, story numbers are impressive. As already noted, over the period from October 2013 to January 2014, for example, over 2,200 stories had been posted onto the site. The highest number of stories posted on any one day in this period was 1,065, all posted on 21 October 2013, the day the option was made active. Other high daily tallies included October 22 with 378 new stories, October 23 with 140 stories, October 24 with 75 stories, October 29 with 96 stories, and December 11 with 89 stories. The rest of this period showed story uploads ranging from zero to over 40 added each day.

Despite Animals Australia's explicit call for and framing of stories in the terms of their two specific questions, many respondents also included further information about their relationships with animals. For instance, close to 55% of respondents examined posted a photograph of an animal and/or of themselves with an animal: primarily with companion animals but also with livestock and wildlife. Nearly 45% of respondents did not upload any photograph, meaning that nearly all photographs uploaded included or were of animals. Examination of these images showed that the most popular animal photograph was of companion dogs (57%); while the most popular livestock animals were cows, chickens, lambs and pigs (10%). Other animals included in photographs were other companion animals (cats 10%, and horses 9%), wildlife (for instance, rabbits, kangaroos, elephants, cheetahs, sharks 7%, and birds 2%), and in some cases stuffed animal toys (5%). Because Rose argues that images cannot be entirely limited to their context, through their choice of animal photographs respondents arguably reveal something of their particular 'social context' (2001, p. 15) and potential political identities. In this instance, although we might extrapolate that respondents are most likely to reside in urban areas, what is manifestly clear in these images

is an emotional connectedness to animals and an awareness that personal politics is itself a form of political action.

Stories also revealed a mix of positions regarding the animal welfare movement. Although some respondents told of only becoming newly aware of the situation of factory farmed animals, a significant number of others revealed how they were already converted to the animal welfare cause, with this campaign simply confirming their commitment:

Brianna: After seeing the ads on tv about factory farming I decided to look more into it on the website. After watching the videos of the horrible conditions and abuse these animals are being put through I couldn't watch anymore and decided to take action. Ever since I was a little girl I've always been passionate about preventing abuse from animals. (21 October 2013)

Loren: I guess I always had my suspicions! One day i picked up an Animals Australia flyer highlighting the horrific cruelty of sows kept in stalls ... I became a vegetarian on that day and a member of Animals Australia! (22 October 2013)

Klaudia: I found out through Jamie Oliver and his relentless campaigns to end caged eggs. I was disgusted, shocked and upset. Get Up gave me the tools to make a change, outside of my personal choices but more broadly to given the enigmas a voice that somewhere along the line in our quest for mass production we lost our soul. (21 October 2013)

Finally, in our analysis of the stories uploaded on 21 October 2013, we found three themes beginning to emerge which we categorised as: vegan/vegetarianism (13%), consumer action (35%) and animal advocacy (52%). Of these three, the first theme groups self-declared pre-existing vegans and/or vegetarians. In the stories comprising this group, respondents present strong views on the importance of this diet in minimising cruelty to animals – and promote this diet in their posts – but do not here articulate commitments to further advocacy. The second theme is that of consumer action. Here respondents describe themselves as having just become aware of factory farming, pledge to change their shopping habits, and express their desire to change the consumption habits of family and friends. Many declare they still eat meat but understand the need for more care in their purchases. The third visible theme is that of declared animal advocacy. Here two subthemes emerge with respondents declaring for either personal or public activist roles. Of these, personal activist commitments typically see respondents vowing to consume more ethically by becoming vegan or vegetarian; while public activist roles see respondents expressing their aims of taking broader political action such as contacting politicians, writing letters, doing research and becoming better informed,

protesting, donating etc. What is particularly important about these kinds of themes is that in each case respondents are self-selecting into a particular community of both feeling and action.

What, however, is most important about this campaign strategy is that, through their sharing of personal stories, respondents are able to articulate and share not only their affective charging but their subsequent advocacy aims and strategies (Rodan et al. 2013). Furthermore, interaction with the site itself affectively charges respondents: through their posting and sharing respondents publicly align themselves with a community of caring and activist consumers, with their views being affectively reinforced by the site's message as well as by their reading of fellow respondents' stories. That is, respondents' choices to change their behaviour receive ongoing affirmation through their reading of others' posts. More generally, as Jasper (1998) notes with reference to social and activist movements, shared and reciprocated affective displays reinforce each other, further building the ties holding the community together. This is particularly important given recognition in social movement theory that although moral shocks can be initially effective in disrupting previously held beliefs, there can subsequently be a tendency for uncomfortable knowledge to be repressed and not acted upon (Jasper 1998; Joy 2008; McDonald 2000; Mika 2006).

What is clear, then, is that shared affective displays both inform and further charge what Rosenwein (2014) calls an 'emotional community', a social group 'whose members adhere to the same valuations of emotions and their expressions' (cited in Crozier-De Rosa 2014, p. 255, cf. Lemmings & Brooks 2014). Thus, just as Duffy and Yell (2014, p. 130) found that 'emotional communities' can be comprised of readers of print media, likewise we claim that respondents are affectively charged and interpellated into a community through their posting to the 'My Make it Possible Story'.

### **Media Circuits and Spikes: Animals Australia and the Affective Mobilising of Community**

Enhancing the effectiveness of this and previous strategies in its affective charging of consumers, Animals Australia also constructs and utilises media circuits (Lange 2008; Pennacchia Punzi 2007) to interconnect consumers, creating through their use a loose social network. Here, although media circuits have previously been defined as 'the use of media by members of a social group to stay connected or to interact with other members of the group'

– media use supports pre-existing social networks by ‘facilitating and technically mediating social interactions’ (Lange 2008, p. 363) – we contend that strategic multi-platform media use by an activist organisation can also interconnect and mobilise previously weakly or non-linked individuals. That is, that the strategic construction of a media circuit – if sufficiently affectively charged and providing sufficient vehicles for the expression and sharing of that charge – can create a network.

In this case, recognising that digital environments can function as ‘mediators and repositories of affect’ able to be ‘shaped and reshaped’ (Kuntsman 2012, pp. 6-7) as well as ‘mined for value’ (Clough 2010, p. 220), Animals Australia overtly works to mobilise affect and consumer action by circulating – and calling for responses to – affective content across multiple forms of both traditional and social media. Animal welfare content from mainstream news coverage, as well as from Animals Australia’s own investigations and those of other animal welfare organisations, is hence repackaged and posted across multiple sites and platforms both by Animals Australia itself and by its viewers. Content thus might be generated by Animals Australia, repackaged for a mainstream news site, and both versions may then circulate throughout a) Animals Australia’s four websites (Animals Australia.org, Animals Australia Unleashed! [the organisation’s youth site], BanLiveExport.com, Make It Possible.com); b) their five Facebook sites (Animals Australia, Animals Australia Unleashed!, Make It Possible, Ban Live Export, Lucy Pig’s Campaign Trail); c) their two YouTube channels (Animals Australia YouTube, Animals Australia Unleashed! YouTube); and d) their three Twitter sites (Animals Australia, Animals Australia Unleashed! and Ban Live Export). This does not include the reposting again of this content by viewers, a strategy Animals Australia (and social media more generally) explicitly encourages.

It is worth noting that social media explicitly encourage the reposting of posts by producing content in ‘easy-to-share formats’ and by encouraging what has been termed ‘spreadability mentality’ (Jenkins, Ford & Green 2013, p. 6). Here Jenkins, Ford and Green claim that ‘citizens count on each other to pass along compelling bits of news, information, and entertainment, often many times over the course of a given day’ (2013, p. 12). This is particularly pertinent with regards to activism and social movements, with a number of studies examining how activists spread information by reposting messages to various platforms as a strategy to mobilise viewers to take political action (cf. Papacharissi & Oliveira 2012; Tufekci & Wilson 2012; Youmans & York 2012).<sup>v</sup> Animals Australia thus

encourages reposting through their tweets (their Twitter platforms enable retweeting), their emails to members (which can be forwarded on), their YouTubes (which are made available for sharing), and the hyperlinks within their websites (which can be copied, pasted and forwarded). The Animals Australia websites and social media use indeed exemplify how the social media activism nexus can increase dialogue online between activist organisations and their participants, as well as documenting individual emotions and political actions offline.

Drilling into what comprises content also facilitates understanding of the mobility and reach of content in the media circuit. Animals Australia, as one of Australia's peak animal welfare organisations, takes an active role in exposing animal welfare abuses within Australia and otherwise affecting Australian animals (as in live export). Thus, content developed by Animals Australia's investigators is typically broadcast via a range of mainstream mass media, and then circulated further via social media. For instance, Animals Australia's investigations have been featured on a number of current affairs program in the country, including *Four Corners*, *60 Minutes*, *6.30 with George Negus*, *Today Tonight*, *A Current Affair*, *The Project*, *Lateline* and *Landline*. More specifically, material from Animals Australia's 29 investigations into the cruelty endemic in Australia's live export industry – cruelty to Australian animals having been documented in Bahrain, Egypt, Gaza (Palestine), Indonesia, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritius, Oman, Qatar, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates – has been broadcast by a range of news programs, with in-depth exposés screened by the *7.30 Report*, *Four Corners* and *Lateline*.

Giving some indication of the affective charge and subsequent mobility of this content, the *Four Corners* exposé of live export screened in May 2011 (entitled 'A Bloody Business') 'generated 60,000 media stories nationally and internationally' and brought 'over 300,000 people' to sign the consequent GetUp! petition to end the trade 'within just three days' (Ban Live Export n.d.). Public rallies in August 2011 drew more than 20,000 participants across Australia's major cities, and Animals Australia noted that Australian MPs received more public correspondence on live export than on any other previous issue, with tens of thousands of emails being sent to the Prime Minister and other ministers (Ban Live Export n.d.). Animals Australia also developed options on all of their websites to facilitate public action being taken by individuals (options include help in contacting and lobbying government ministers and senators for an end to the industry, help in writing to the press, and encouragement to share campaign aims across an individual's own social networks). The

organisation announced in June 2013 that over one million such actions against the industry had so far been taken (the current figure stands at over 1,145,000 actions) (Ban Live Export n.d.). It is also worth noting regarding the affective charging of these exposés in the live export industry, and their capacity to mobilise people, that such actions are drawing on already socially accepted views that the intentional infliction of unnecessary pain on animals is unjustifiable. For instance, a 2012 survey of the Australia community found that 78% of Australians believe live exports were cruel – a majority consistent with another poll from 2011 – and that 74% were more likely to vote for a political candidate who promised to end live animal export (Lonergan Research 2012).

Public pressure, along with politicians' own affective charging from exposés, also saw three separate bills presented to Parliament (one presented by Independent MP Andrew Wilkie and Independent Senator Nick Xenophon 20 June 2011, one presented by Greens MP Adam Bandt, and a new bill presented by Independent MP Andrew Wilkie 31 October 2011<sup>vi</sup>) to reform and/or end the live export trade. Public outcry after other exposés of cruelty in the live export industry led to the suspension of live export to Indonesia for five weeks (June 2011), and trade resumed only after new requirements were set in place necessitating OIE standards for transport, handling and slaughter.<sup>vii</sup> Such pressure 'forced the Australian Government to, for the first time, regulate the live export trade' (RSPCA: Live Export n.d.). Public pressure also entailed the introduction in October 2011 of the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS), a system designed to prevent cruelty by requiring minimum animal welfare standards in importing countries, and tracing all animals exported. Given however the documented inefficacy of the ESCAS in preventing animal cruelty,<sup>viii</sup> pressure against the trade continues with continued campaigning by multiple animal advocacy organisations, the Greens and some other smaller political parties.

Strategic use of social media across multiple campaigns and platforms (and linking advocacy organisations) to constitute media circuits also results in clear increases, 'spikes', in targeted social media activity. For instance, from 21 to 22 October 2013, the two days after the launch of the 'My Make it Possible Story' share option in the Animals Australia website which saw 1,443 stories uploaded in total, also saw spikes in Twitter and Facebook. Twitter presence primarily encompassed responses to Animals Australia's tweeting about puppy factories (drawing on an Animals Australia campaign, 'Don't leave me by myself') and pigs (drawing on the 'Make it Possible' campaign), with Animals Australia also retweeting ABC News

tweets regarding both issues. In this period, the Animals Australia Facebook sites saw discussion of a news item regarding Victoria’s Agriculture Minister being forced to apologise after dog shootings and of the Animals Australia post ‘How has Make it possible changed you? Upload your story’ = help create a national radio ad!’:

Date	Platform	Post Stories	Likes	Comments	Shares
21–22 October 2013	Animals Australia Facebook	‘How has Make it possible changed you? Upload your story’ = help create a national radio ad!’	291	10	13
		Response to news item: ‘Victoria’s Agriculture Minister forced to apologise after dog shootings’	3,278	129	958

Table 1: Media Circuit 21–22 October 2013

A second short period, 30 to 31 October 2013, saw only 70 stories uploaded, but also saw three spikes in Facebook, one of which related to the fate of live export sheep in Jordan broadcast on ABC *Lateline*:

Date	Platform	Posted Stories	Likes	Comments	Shares
30–31 October 2013	Animals Australia Facebook	‘Live exporters: we will hold you to account’ (with interlinked video)	1,905	599	1,142
		‘From puppy farm to freedom’ (with interlinked video)	1,598	208	1,465
		‘Rescued! 150 dogs...’	1,135	36	23

Table 2: Media Circuit 30–31 October 2013

Two other periods in 2013 – November 6 to 7 and 13 to 14 – show similar spikes in social media activity in the Animals Australia sites. For instance, although neither of these periods saw high story uploads, November 6 to 7 encompassed another live export disaster which garnered extensive public attention:

Date	Platform	Posted Stories	Likes	Comments	Shares
6–7 Nov. 2013	Animals Australia Facebook	‘Beyond words – this bull should make Australia weep’	2,185	815	1,466
13–14 Nov. 2013		‘How many high-fives for Kevin Thompson MP?’ (after his call to end live export)	4,399	216	926

		'What percentage of puppies in pet shops...'	1,280	166	402
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Table 3: Media Circuit November 2013

This kind of pattern in stories being posted, with peaks in activity every week to ten days, appears consistent throughout Animals Australia's social media use. Posts are strongly affective, highlighting emotional responses to topics, and typically also using still images and video to further facilitate moral shock and viewers' alignment with the Animals Australia community.

It is of course important to note that as with many media fora, the percentage engaging actively is probably far outweighed by those who may only read or view the material posted. The potential reach, however, of this posted content is also significant, about which the following figures give some indication:

Date	Platform	Tweets	Following	Followers
May 2014	Twitter (Animals Australia main site)	10,778	5,324	21,664
	Unleashed! Twitter	2,429	2,306	2,642

Table 4: Media Circuit Reach May 2014

Date	Platform	Animals Australia	Likes
May 2014	Facebook	Animals Australia main site	285,208
		BanLiveExport	36,826
		'Make it Possible'	20,753
		Animals Australia Unleashed!	18,340

Table 5: Media Circuit Reach May 2014

Reach is also demonstrated in website figures stating the number of activist actions undertaken by visitors to the Animals Australia sites. For instance, Ban Live Export listed 1,139,406 online actions taken as of early May 2014 (including sharing the campaign through social media, lobbying politicians, writing to the press, donating); Animals Australia Unleashed! includes a 'Life Saving' counter registering pledges to vegetarianism which, as of early May 2014, stood at 143,872; 'Make it Possible' counts the numbers of visitors pledging to either a) refuse factory farmed products, b) eat fewer animal products, c) go meat free, d) donate, and as of early May 2014, this counter listed 208,758 pledges.



Although never definitive, such metrics do give some indication of the reach of a campaign message (Ly-Le 2014; McCafferty 2011; Rucht 2013). Reach and impact can also be mapped through such factors as donation rates<sup>ix</sup> and the shifting discursive positions expressly articulated in online comments fora (Rodan et al. 2013). It is also worth noting that a number of studies recognise that engagement in social media based activism, along with the resulting public alignment with the cause and correlative affective recharging, may move individuals to attend campaign meetings and political events, and to take further action (Cammaerts, Mattroni & McCurdy eds. 2013; Gladwell 2010; Meikle 2002; Pickerill 2006; Shirky 2011).

### **Media Circuits and Locative Space**

One final point to make regarding Animals Australia's construction and deployment of affectively driven media circuits through its multi-platform campaigning concerns the effective location of the circuits. Through digital mobile devices such as mobile telephones, tablets, iPads, laptops, Google Glass and other wearable devices, Animals Australia can access consumers at any time and/or location as well as in any space, and vice versa. In potentially making animal welfare issues visible on a regular, even daily, basis, mobile interfaces – smart mobile phones (Android, iPhone, etc.), GPS, network interfaces – can enable organisations like Animals Australia to deeply affect and mobilise consumers whilst they are in their everyday spaces (Farman 2012, p. 36). For example information accessed via digital mobile devices regarding animal products – accessed, perhaps, while in the supermarket – can deeply affect present and future everyday purchasing decisions. Arguably, because these mobile devices are now part of many consumers' everyday spaces and routines, people's personal places and routines are transformed, becoming irremediably politicised and ethicised (Farman 2012, p. 40).

In this sense, as Farman explains, our embodied relationship to such mobile interfaces is arguably 'unique' insofar as they can come to structure our experience of our world, experience which is itself not 'transferrable across media' (2012, p. 44). Digital mobile devices in this context can enable our 'sensory inscribed experience' (Farman 2012, p. 37) of the virtual within the actual world. As such, in interfacing with consumers through social media and through mobile devices, Animals Australia is actively interpellating consumers and their worlds into the network and community of animal welfare activism; social media consumers can become *everyday* activists through their mobile and locative media. Finally, through such vehicles as the 'My Make it Possible Story' option, which calls consumers to

share their personal stories – at any time and place given the capacities of digital mobile devices – the mobile interface is also importantly a ‘collaborative space’ (Farman 2012, p. 53). That is, it becomes a place that is always already affectively charged with personal meaning – made familiar through personal stories and images, and through affective sharing and recharging – for the participants. It is this work, then, of using social media, of constructing familiarity and collaboration, of interpellating and affirming affective investment, that informs Animals Australia’s clear success in gradually building community momentum around what is arguably one of the most challenging current ethical issues in Australia – that of changing consumers’ relations with their everyday food items, animal products – and achieving social and legal reform regarding livestock welfare.

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### Notes

<sup>i</sup> Affective charging has been considered core to understanding and analysing social movements and collective actions, with movement organisers and participants explicitly working to appeal to, develop and build on affective ties (see, for instance, Jasper 2011; 1998; Jasper & Poulsen 1995; Papacharissi & Oliveira 2012; Taylor & Whittier 1995). Such ties create what has been called the ‘libidinal economy’ of movements and collective actions (Goodwin 1997).

<sup>ii</sup> Pantti and Wahl-Jorgensen’s (2011) study of press coverage of British man-made disasters focused, for instance, on feeling words, specifically those referring to anger, as an example of sharing emotion in contemporary Western societies (also see Yell 2012, 2010). With regards to emotions marking ‘felt judgements’, Dixon describes them as ‘bodily sensations’ that signal that an individual’s personal and/or social situation is not in accord with their ‘hopes, values, and well-being’ (cited in Lemmings & Brooks 2014, p. 3).

<sup>iii</sup> Animals Australia has made and had broadcast a range of radio advertisements. As well as the ‘Your story: “Make it Possible”’ advertisement, other radio advertisements include the ‘Old Macdonald’s Myth’ (two advertisements), ‘Lucy Speaks’ (‘Dark in Here’, ‘Stall NJ’, ‘Pregnant Again’, Christmas broadcast). See <http://www.animalsaustralia.org/media/ads.php>

<sup>iv</sup> See the campaign transcript available at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fM6V6lq\\_p0o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fM6V6lq_p0o)

<sup>v</sup> Space precludes a full review of the literature on the nexus between social media and activism. Readers could however refer to the studies on environmental activism by Lester and Hutchins (2012; 2009) and Cammaerts, Mattroni and McCurdy’s edited edition of *Mediation and Protest Movements* (2013), which discusses several empirical studies about how activists have utilised social media to mobilise, coordinate and direct political action offline.

<sup>vi</sup> These were the Live Animal Export (Slaughter) Prohibition Bill 2011 and Live Animal Export Restriction and Prohibition Bill 2011. Independent MP Andrew Wilkie also introduced the Livestock Export (Animal Welfare Conditions) Bill 2011 but this Bill lapsed.

<sup>vii</sup> OIE refers to the *Office International des Epizooties*. Created in 1924, and renamed the World Organisation for Animal Health in 2003, the organisation kept its historical acronym (OIE World Organisation for Animal Health 2014).

<sup>viii</sup> For details of the major breaches of ESCAS and other cruelty complaints regarding the live export industry, see the Australian Government Department of Agriculture site, <http://www.daff.gov.au/biosecurity/export/live-animals/livestock/regulatory->

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framework/compliance-investigations/investigations-regulatory-compliance and Animals Australia's summation, <http://www.banliveexport.com/facts/history-of-disasters.php>

<sup>ix</sup> As stated in the *Lateline* broadcast (16/06/2013), Animals Australia under the Microscope, 'The group's audited accounts for the last full financial year show that Animals Australia had an income of just over \$3 million ... [with] the bulk of it, nearly \$2 million, [coming] from individual donations'. The rest was gained from memberships and different fundraising events.

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