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This is a final draft version of the following published document:

Reed, Matthew J (2016). *'This loopy idea' An analysis of UKIP's social media discourse in relation* **to rurality and climate change. Space and Polity. ISSN 1356-2576**

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Key words

UKIP; climate change; renewable energy; social media; rural

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"This loopy idea that we can cover Britain in ugly disgusting ghastly windmills and that somehow our future energy needs will come from that"
(Nigel Farage, Leader of UKIP, quoted in (Ward, 2013).

Introduction

The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) has risen to be one of the challenger parties to the existing system of politics in the UK, with a focus on membership of the EU, the effects of immigration on British society and attacks on the Westminster elite. Most research by political scientists to date has focused on the psephology of UKIPs support, its possible consequences for existing parties, and the possibility of, then its prospects in, an in/out referendum on EU membership (Abedi & Lundberg, 2008; Ford & Goodwin, 2014; Goodwin & Milazzo, 2015). UKIP has argued that its challenge is broader than these core topics and it has a series of policies that underpin its claims about being a serious political party. To date, scholarly attention has focused less on these policies and, the particular ways in which UKIP seeks to communicate its arguments. Analysis of topics other than the main three themes of UKIP may help in assessing whether UKIP does have a wider policy platform, the scope, and form of their support, as well as their campaigning tactics.

This paper focuses on the way that UKIP attempted to communicate its policies and messages about the topic of renewable energy during 2013-14 when it had seen success in the European Parliamentary elections and was preparing for what it anticipated being greater success in the General Election of 2015 (Goodwin and Milazzo 2015). Renewable energy is a fruitful topic to consider as it has a strategic importance in discussion of the future of the UK whilst it raises questions about the role of science in politics, the tensions between the value of particular, mostly rural, places in relation to wider societal goals, and how the state should intervene in markets (Mitchell & Connor, 2004; van der Horst, 2007). During this period all the major political parties were campaigning about the cost of domestic energy bills, making it a topic of more generalised debate, within which context UKIP made their contribution. As will become apparent the emergent theme from the analysis was not simply rurality and renewable energy but the connection of the latter theme to scepticism about climate change.

How political parties communicate their messages has been the focus of sustained scholarly interest, most recently through the role of marketing in campaigning, as well as analysis of the role of discourse (Chadwick, 2000; G Cook, 2004; Wodak, KhosraviNik, & Mral, 2013). With the emergence of new forms of media, in particular, social media, the means of representation are more closely in the control of political actors (Castells, 2007; Miller, Ginnis, Stobart, Krasodomski-Jones, & Clemence, 2015). The immediacy and frequency of communication through platforms such as Twitter has added another strand of published materials to the more familiar pamphlets, reports, and manifestos. Social media is often treated as a separate activity to other forms of persuasive messaging and activities, in part because it has often been considered quantitatively with little consideration of the detail of the content or the materials toward which the social media directs the reader (Turcotte, York, Irving, Scholl, & Pingree, 2015). This paper uses the novel approach of the qualitative analyses the social media posts of one key UKIP representative and a sample of the linked materials, along with more traditional media coverage in newspapers, to reveal the key themes in the UKIP discourse.

UKIPs concerns are explicitly spatial, and renewable energy offers an opportunity to analyse the tensions between these interests and mostly rural places that provide a different set of political opportunities than the urban and suburban areas where most politics is conducted (Reed, 2015; Woods, 2005). As Woods argues 'rural politics' is about the social and economic relationships within rural areas, while 'the politics of the rural' suggests the wider symbolic uses of rurality in political debates generally about a sense of tradition and continuity (Woods 2005). Other authors have noted the importance of 'nation' and 'tradition' to many supporters of UKIP, suggesting that the politics of the rural may be significant within their discourse but little attention has been paid to how this might link to rural politics (Wellings & Baxendale, 2015).

This paper progresses by first contemplating the literature about UKIP to identify the ways in which its political platform is understood and how that links to its campaigning activity that leads into a discussion of the use of the term discourse in this context. One of the innovations offered in this paper is to analyse social media in parallel with other media coverage, the justification for this approach and an elucidation of the method used is the next section of the paper. From this point, examples of the media collected are used to discuss the themes found through the analysis of how these link to UKIPs discourse. The paper concludes by contemplating how UKIP's arguments about renewables frame the topic within a concern for free markets, climate change scepticism and a championing of fossil fuels. Renewable energy is used as a route to return the debate to UKIP's three main themes, local protests are used opportunistically and climate change scepticism emerges as a theme, suggesting that they are not broadening their policy platform but rather remain a narrowly defined political party.

Understanding UKIP

The rise of UKIP is part of a wider trend of an increase in radical, 'populist' parties in many democratic nations ranging from the Tea Party in the US through to the True Finns in Finland (Arter, 2010; Betz, 1993). UKIP's rise has been tempered by the British electoral system, which places very high barriers in the way of emergent parties gaining Parliamentary representation, pushing them to second order elections especially the European Parliamentary elections held under a more proportionate system. This trend has resulted in the ironic position that the European Parliament has been the platform from which UKIP has organised much of its campaign for the UK to the leave the EU. Formed in 1993 by those opposed to the increasing integration of the EU, for many years, UKIP was a marginal player in electoral politics (Ford and Goodwin 2014). Quite whether it would ever be able to become a dominant electoral force has been a consistent focus of scholarly attention, as has attempting to characterise its emerging political offer (Ford, Goodwin, & Cutts, 2011).

More recently attention has come to focus on what drives the UKIP political prescription instead of solely its electoral chances and challenges (Tournier-Sol, 2015). Partly this is because it is clear that an electoral breakthrough, beyond the second order elections, seems unlikely and as one of its primary goals, a referendum on UK membership, has been realised. The Conservative Party offered a referendum as part of its 2015 manifesto in part because the diversion of votes away from them toward UKIP was damaging to their chances of re-election (Evans & Mellon, 2015; Goodwin & Milazzo, 2015). Simultaneously it became apparent that appeal of UKIP was spreading beyond Conservative voters to those who had previously supported Labour and the Liberal Democrats. While the topic of EU membership

remains the central goal of UKIP, widening its campaigning toward immigration has allowed it to emerge from the fringe.

A libertarian, Unionist, English, populist party UKIP has sought to appeal to what Ford and Goodwin have described as 'the left behind' angry section of contemporary British society. As Wellings and Baxendale have noted, through the moves to devolution within the UK and the rise of the Scots and Welsh nationalist parties, feelings of English nationalism have been increasingly mobilised by UKIP (Wellings and Baxendale 2015). The EU is the target but the feelings and experiences that fuel support for UKIP are embedded in recent British experience for particular groups, especially older, white, English men (Lord Ashcroft, 2012). UKIP supporters seek to escape from what they see as the fetters of the state apparatus and big business which prevent the self-determination of the British. This sense of Englishness is often framed nostalgically, and turns its face against the recent waves of migration and harks back to the years before the end of Empire. During the twentieth century, this was often framed as a relationship with rural landscapes, and rural areas being the ethnic homelands of the English (Matless, 1998; McKay, 2000). Finally, the party frames itself as being one of the outsiders who are frustrating the plans of the self-serving metropolitan elite. In this view, detailed policy prescriptions and coherent platforms are less important than the genuine sentiments that UKIP embodies and articulates. It is a narrative of social disenchantment and civic disenfranchisement met by a popular, English revolt (Myers, 2004).

In this context, the protests and contention around renewable energy would seem an opportunity for UKIP's narrative (Eltham, Harrison, & Allen, 2008; Stevenson, 2009). The UK government had committed itself to an ambitious suite of policies to boost low carbon energies by 2020. Through a combination of measures to create demand for the energy from renewables and incentives to supply it, all of which were to be paid for through consumer energy bills (Jacobsson et al., 2009). Energy generation is broadly a rural matter whether it is RE schemes for wind or solar, or a new nuclear energy plant on the coast of Somerset or fracking in national parks or on farmland. Many schemes are met by sustained opposition, cutting edge technology is often not seen as adding to the beauty of the culturally cherished landscape and the carefully cultivated agro-ecosystems of British rural landscapes (Etherington, 2009; Woods & Goodwin, 2003). As this opposition gained momentum, it began to spread to other projects such as off-shore arrays of wind turbines and solar farms. RE started to pit national policy goals against local planning committees, in a context where many of the previous party political loyalties were already dissolving. The anti-wind farm groups did not cohere into a movement but remained a loose network of people contesting projects in their area, as the subject became part of rural politics as well as the politics of the rural (Reed 2015, Woods 2015). The major political parties have all backed the need for RE and the low carbon agenda, except for UKIP.

Methods

The methods and approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary approach concerned with investigating the linguistic character of socio-cultural structures or processes (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, & Vetter, 2000). Society and culture are shaped by discourse and are simultaneously constituted by it, with power being manifest within discourse and through it (Foucault, 2000). Discourses are always situated in a particular historical and social context, within which they are always related to and in dialogue with other discourses through texts (Wodak et al., 2013). In CDA text can be interpreted widely to include other semiotic forms such as images or sounds. To fully understand the ideological

role of language it is necessary to comprehend the triangulation of discourse to understand the intentions of those who created the texts and the perceptions of those who receive the message. Because of limitations of time this paper confines itself solely to the analysis of texts, leaving the other parts of the triangulation to future investigation. Albeit, as discussed below, how these texts are structured can indicate the intentions of those forming the texts.

The analysis of how political actors seek to represent their ideas and actions have a very long tradition, to which new forms of social media append another strand of activity in the analysis of political discourse (Chadwick, 2000; Freeden, 1998). These new forms of media differ in that they are more immediately interactive, can be directed to supporters or other interested parties more quickly and through intertextuality augment other activities. Significantly social media is user-generated content, which is produced and reproduced in a network form, outside of the editorial controls of other forms of mass media. It is logical to analyse not only the subject matter of the communication but that to which it connects if appropriate and the other contextual media from more established outlets. In this paper, the social media output is analysed alongside the media to which it directs readers and the press coverage in newspapers, with the aim of understanding the interactions between the forms of media as well as the messages conveyed.

Conover and colleagues undertook an analysis of 18,000 politically active Twitter users, across the political spectrum and conducted a quantitative analysis of the content of the postings, the social networks that could be discerned from these postings and biographical information from attached profiles (Conover, Goncalves, Flammini, & Menczer, 2012). In contrast to earlier studies from 2008 they found that the political right had, in their 2011 sample, become effective users of Twitter. Their analysis reveals:

> a right-leaning constituency comprised of highly-active, politically-engaged social media users, a trend we see reflected in the communication and social networks in which these individuals participate (Conover, Goncalves, Flammini, & Menczer, 2012:5).

More tightly networked than their opponents, right wing users are more active in creating political content in their tweets and vocal about their positions than their left-wing peers. These findings indicate that organising across and within social media has strategic aspects in group formation, the formation of messages and in disseminating content. The quantitative methods used by Conover and collaborators relied on the use of hashtags (#) or indexing terms:

> We define the set of pertinent political communication as any tweet containing, at least, one political hashtag. While an individual can engage in political communication without including a hashtag, the potential audience for such content is limited primarily to his or her immediate followers (Conover, Goncalves, Flammini, & Menczer, 2012:5).

Methodologically this opens an analytical space for studies of those users whose communication is intended for this limited audience and as the identification of political sentiment in quantitative studies is tied to the presence of these indexing terms.

DiGrazia and colleagues have also used Twitter to discern voting intentions; their findings confirm those of Connover about the practical organisation of conservatives through social media in the US (Chew & Eysenbach, 2010; DiGrazia, McKelvey, Bollen, & Rojas, 2013). They point to the limitations of earlier studies but through an analysis of over ½ million tweets posted during 795 competitive election races in the US between 2010-12 found that social media has a role in indicating political behaviour. Their evidence suggests that social media is linked to the social networks of those posting and is a better indicator of voting behaviour than the choice of TV viewing. Although not directly indicative of electoral results large-scale analysis of social media, "indicate[s] that the 'buzz' or public discussion

about a candidate on social media can be used as an indicator of voter behaviour" (DiGrazia, McKelvey, Bollen, & Rojas, 2013:1). They conclude that "social media activity provides a valid indicator of political decision making" that can form part of the future of the study of political behaviour.

These previous studies have tended to be undertaken using quantitative techniques as part of attempts to assess the wider utility of social media analysis and are viewed as developments in the applications of information sciences (Conover et al., 2011; Huberman, Romero, & Wu, 2008). The literature on the analysis of social media in marketing more broadly acknowledges that the value of such studies would be in the qualitative detail, but this is burdensome because of the volume of materials (Choudhruy & Harrigan, 2014). This paper differs in analysing social media alongside traditional press coverage and the inclusion of referent material by following a sample of hyperlinks, to consider the content of the social media in some detail. In this manner, it seeks to link more established methods of analysing political discourse through the consideration of corpus of textual data with emerging technologies (G. Cook, 2015; Darier, 1999; Freeden, 1994). All the Twitter postings are in the public domain, and the press material was collected via the Lexis-Nexis system to respect copyright.

The sample of documents analysed comprises of three distinct bodies of text and attendant data. First, is the Twitter feed of the UKIP energy spokesperson the MEP Roger Helmer between the period of June 2012 and 16 April 2014 and a corpus of 4912 tweets, about 57% of the tweets he had posted since joining Twitter in January 2010. Alongside Helmer's feed for reference those of his Party leader Nigel Farage MEP and as well as the official party twitter feed @UKIP_UK[1]. Because of the limitations of the software, it was not possible to collect all the tweets from these reference accounts but approximately 32% of all the posts published were obtained covering the period April 2013 through to April 2014. Similarly, it was not possible to collect an entirely consistent sample but the size of the sample goes some way to suggest it represents the arguments of UKIP; from Helmer's account 4912 tweets were collected, from Farage's 3195 and the UKIP account 3179; an aggregate of 16,966 tweets.

A purposeful sample of a 1000 tweets from the Twitter feed of Roger Helmer were coded manually, with an inductive approach to code generation taken. These tweets covered the period October 2012 through to October 2013 and where possible documents linked to in those tweets were collected, creating a collection of 114 texts. To this was added a UK wide search of newspapers (national and regional), using the search terms of 'UKIP', 'Rural' and 'Renewables', for the period between January 2013 and April 2014. The search term 'energy' was inexact, as it was used about the challenge presented by UKIP rather the policy in question. When duplicates were removed this created a collection of 89 articles, notices, and letters, covering the breadth of the UK. Previous studies of internet based materials have tended to focus on collecting web pages by key terms or through databases of press materials through keyword search (G Cook, Reed, & Twiner, 2009; Lockie, 2006). The development of the capabilities of the qualitative analytic software, in this case, the latest version of Nvivo 10, has allowed for the management of

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[1] No assumption is made as to the authorship of the tweets, only that they are on the approved account of the name politician. Goodwin and Milazzo report that Farage's account at times is operated by members of his staff (Goodwin and Milazzo 2015).

larger bodies of text and for the combination of automated coding alongside that conducted manually.

The coding frame for these collections of texts was developed through an iterative process with the coding of Helmer's Twitter feed, described above, providing the initial round of key terms and concepts (G Cook, Pieri, & Robbins, 2004). The next round of coding was informed by the capacity of the software to provide word frequency counts of the entire corpus as well as selected groups of texts. Through comparison between the inductive coding and the word frequency charts, an integrated set of codes was developed with specific queries answered by targeted searches through the corpus. The software allows for searches that include the context of a word, or the degree which stemmed words and synonyms can be collected. In this way, the software and the size of the corpus allow for a form of qualitative enquiry that is enabled by access to a scope and precision of data retrieval only recently facilitated by the software. This approach makes it distinct from the forms of data enquiry using algorithms and programmed searches that are being developed in the analyses of 'big data' investigations of social media.

Strategic uses of Twitter

Social media offers the opportunity for interactivity with other users through options which can be used in separately or in combination, these include: directing readers to other pieces of information or opinion (see discussion below) through hyperlinks, re-Tweeting (RT) or repeating the tweets of others, engaging with other users through directing messages to them by using their Twitter name or taking part in more general discussions with indexing terms or in Twitter terminology hashtags (#)(see above). If we consider Roger Helmer's Twitter account made scant use of indexing terms (#) during this period (1.8% of tweets). This pattern suggests that its use was not to engage in wider debates happening on Twitter but rather to present his case and arguments only those who were following his account. Such a strategy of not engaging with others via Twitter is evident in Table 1, slightly less than 11% of all Helmer's tweets mention another organisation or Twitter user.

A further consideration of Table 1 makes it clear that most of the mentions are of either Helmer's colleagues in UKIP, Conservative journalists or climate sceptic think tanks, with the rest accounted for by brief exchanges with opponents. In this way, Twitter is being used to reinforce his networks, and there is a degree of reciprocation with Farage mentioning Helmer 5 times. The data in Table 1 suggests that the primary use being made of Twitter by Helmer, and it appears his colleagues, was to focus on creating political content and sharing it with their Twitter followers. Such a strategy makes it distinct from newspapers, but more akin to leaflets and pamphlets, in that they are public documents directed to particular groups. The main @UKIP account representing the party as a whole did make use of hashtags such as #ukip, #farageonfriday, #ukipspring, #teamnigel, suggesting that its role was to engage in a different form of dialogue. A detailed comparison of the words most frequently used by the three Twitter accounts representing UKIP presents another aspect of how they are being used. While Farage as leader of the party is promoting UKIP, his Conservative opponents and his campaigning activities, he mentions energy policy only 18 times. Helmer is engaged in promoting UKIP but is also creating political content about his policy brief through his blogging, linking to the content of those he agrees with and re-posting their materials through Re-tweeting. With a small amount of time taken with directly debating with opponents but a greater effort placed on framing their arguments and attacking their positions.

Rural life

Helmer, and to a lesser degree, Farage present a conservative picture of rural life in which pubs, traditional landscape, and hunting with hounds predominate. Farage, with his reputation for a fondness for a pint of beer, focused one tweet on the importance of the pub.

> Not only does @DPJHOdges get my local [pub] wrong (I have 2, mind) but he also misses the point that in rural England these things do matter.
> (Farage, Tweet, 12/12/2012)

Helmer, by contrast, has a slightly wider frame of reference, much of which is concerned with hunting with hounds and its defence:

> RSPCA blows £330,000 of charity money persecuting the Heythrop Hunt. Sensible people will resolve never to give them another penny (Helmer, Tweet, 19/12/2012)
>
> Boxing day greetings to Hunt Supporters everywhere. I'm planning to get to the Fernie Meet in Great Bowden (Helmer, Tweet, 26/12/2013)

Rural pollution is more closely identified with litter and a threat to the existing visual quality of the countryside and the landscape a theme repeated in the next section as well. A lasting legacy of the 2012 Olympics was:

> Seems we've inspired a new generation of cyclists. But are they leaving the empty Red Bull cans along country lanes?
> (Helmer, Tweet, 07/08/2012)

And in the following year:

> Is it time to ask Coke and McDonalds to sponsor litter-teams in country lanes to recover and recycle their discarded packaging?
> (Helmer, Tweet, 03/03/2013)

Helmer only mentions agriculture four times once to blame floods on EU policies, twice to highlight UKIP's policy to pay organic farmers less for agri-environmental work and once in passing. Rural life in this account is not contemplated in any depth but is constructed as something under threat from litter, 'greens', those people who oppose hunting with hounds and most significantly the EU via RE technologies.

Messages about renewable energy

This focus on shaping and spreading political messages starts with a deprecation of wind turbines and most forms of RE. Opposition to wind turbines is frequent and repeated; they are presented as unsightly, expensive, and ineffective.

> Because they're [wind turbines] despoiling our countryside, driving up energy prices, and undermining our economic competitiveness.
> (Helmer, Tweet, 05/08/2013)
>
> Whilst you reach for your jumper to save on heating bills the EU gives your money to   the energy companies to…(weblink)
> (Farage, Tweet, 28/10/2013)

The current landscape and its aesthetic qualities are partly reflected in this response about shale gas extraction or 'fracking', that fossil fuels are less visually intrusive:

> @AGrumpyGit Far happier with a fracking well than with the four large wind turbines we actually have close to the village.
> (Helmer, Tweet, 24/09/2013)

The turbines are identified with UKIP's opponents, which in turn are viewed as being against the economic progress of the nation and of damaging

the rural landscape (in chronological order):
> National Trust: "Turbines have grace & beauty". No they don't. They have
> waste & subsidy.
> (Helmer, Tweet, 25/02/2013)
>
> Friends of the Earth Spokesman: "We don't want an energy policy that wrecks
> our green & pleasant land". He must mean wind farms.
> (Helmer, Tweet, 05/08/2013)
>
> Here we go again. Greens implacably opposed to industry, jobs, prosperity
> (Helmer, Tweet, 28/09/2013)
>
> @ret_ward Because they are despoiling our countryside. driving up energy prices, and
> undermining our economic competitiveness
> (Helmer, Tweet, 05/08/2013)

Later this takes on a more concrete form in a threat to house prices:
> Good piece on house price impact of wind farms from 'Support Melton Against Rural
> Turbines (SMART) [web link]. (Helmer, Tweet, 07/12/2013)

One of the aspects of the countryside that needs to be protected is productive land
that is covered by solar farms or used by other RE technologies:
> Waitrose [Supermarket chain] warns of food shortages & inflation. Meantime
> Peterbro' Council wants to put wind & solar across 900 acres of prime farming
> land.
> (Helmer, Tweet, 05/01/2013)
>
> Just been in Peterbro'[Peterborough], where they want to turn 3000 acres of
> prime agricultural land into a solar farm. Harvesting subsidies, not cereals.
> (Helmer, Tweet, 01/02/2013)

Just as it is evident from most of these Tweets, the arguments are linked. The Tweet below
manages to connect the passionate, the symbolic, and an attack on the populist trope of
'political correctness':
> Most of all, I hate wind turbines because they're symbols of monstrous pointless waste, and
> futile political correctness.
> (Helmer, Tweet, 01/07/2012)

Helmer's arguments do not just link his rejection of wind farms and
renewables to a case that they are the products of a subsidy system, but also to
scepticism about the reality of climate change. This argument is often expressed indirectly
through tackling the 'climate alarmism' that he claims is perpetuated by UKIPs
opponents.
> Climate alarmism: Why we should challenge the 'scientific consensus' (web link). Andhow
> money drives green attitudes.
> (Helmer, Tweet, 07/10/2013)

The web link takes the reader to Helmer's blog where he explains his position in
more detail, seeing that climate change advocates are driven by their interest in the
subsidies provided by the state:
> Gallowglaich fails to understand the processes by which government funding,
> regulation and lobbying work. Big companies, to get a hearing, have to genuflect to the
> current orthodoxy. If a major oil company went to talk to the European Commission and took
> a climate-sceptic view, they simply wouldn't get a hearing. Of course Shell's forecasts reflect
> the orthodoxy.
> ('Fossil Fuels are the Future' Helmer, 2013)

Companies find advantage in reflecting the 'orthodoxy', as do individuals,
Helmer admits to gaining a £1000 a year from the subsidy for the solar panels on his
Roof, but ultimately this alarmism is driven by the EU and their insistence on the importance
of climate change. By implication only courageous individuals, prepared to set self-interest
aside, will tell the truth.

It is not just the institutions of the EU that receive criticism from Helmer but the IPCC
(International Panel on Climate Change) in the sample, 78 tweets mention the IPCC.
None of those references involve positive terms, but it is 'bogus', 'falling apart'
'doctored', 'formalised guesswork', 'decisively disproved' 'absurd'. Readers are
Frequently directed to climate sceptic websites and, as noted above, Helmer is a frequent 're-
tweeter' of posts by climate sceptic think tanks. This rejection of climate change is not
simplistic, in a reply to two opponents he explained, "And we're not sceptical about climate
research. We're sceptical about the IPCC's dodgy assumptions and modelling" (Helmer
Tweet 18/03/201). In this way, Helmer attacks those who are seeking to raise concerns about
climate change, then links this to the overarching project of UKIP to withdraw the UK from
the EU and positions himself as being against 'flawed' science, not the scientific process
itself.

Linked Media

From the 12 months of Helmer's Twitter feed coded manually, it was possible to recover
114 documents, of which 18 linked to 'The Telegraph' or 'Sunday Telegraph', 8 to UKIPs
own publicity, 5 to 'The Daily Mail' or Mail on-line, 6 to a range of US-based
newspapers and 46 to a range of climate change sceptic websites, the remaining 31 were from
a variety of other news sources ranging from 'The Wall Street Journal' to 'The Spectator'
magazine.

The coverage in the Telegraph newspapers and the Mail in print and on-line was uniformly
hostile to RE technologies and policies to support them. An example of the reporting is the
article reporting comments by the then Environment Minister Owen Paterson: "'Soviet' wind
farm subsidies blight rural lives and may have worst impact than climate change, says
environment minister" (10/10/2012). Another article on the Telegraph's blogging site by
James Delingpole attacks the IPPC:
> IPCC lead author Dr Richard Linden has accused it of having "sunk to a level of hilarious
> incoherence. Nigel Lawson has called it "not science but mumbo jumbo." The   Global
> Warming Policy Foundation's Dr David Whitehouse has described the IPCC's   panel as
> "evasive and inaccurate" in the way it tried to dodge the key issue of the 15-   year at least
> pause in global warming. (Delingpole 6/10/2013)

That all those he cites are well-known climate change sceptics. Lord Lawson launched the
Global Warming Policy Foundation (GWPF) which is not mentioned by Delingpole as he
continues to argue, "The man-made global warming scare story has not a shred of scientific
credibility" and that its defenders hide behind a "barrage of lies, ad homs, coverups, rank-
closings, blustering threats".

The blog posts include a wide variety of climate change sceptic websites, some based in the
US but also UK sites such as 'Bishop Hill' and the now defunct 'Lost Horizons' (how the
EU's obsession with wind energy is destroying Britain's coastlines & communities) blog.
Most of the blogs are engaged in a continuous sceptical commentary on the IPCC and the
climate change arguments generally, highlighting scientific papers that confirm their

arguments. They are acute in observing what they see as contradictions with, or between, the arguments of their opponents, arguing that if the detail is not consistent, then the whole case is flawed.

> In a prime example of how the warmists cannot get their story straight, Borenstein's article turns former Vice President Al Gore's Antarctic claims and 60 Minutes' claims on their head. (AP's Seth Borenstein 10/10/2012)

Collectively they provide a constant stream of rebuttal; contention, and commentary on the policy headlines regarding climate change instead of on RE technologies.

As a subsection of the blogs are reports by think tanks, principally the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) which promotes free market thinking, the GWPF as mentioned above and Civitas a non-party think tank promoting "the enduring ideals that have made Britain a fortress of liberal civilisation." The latter during this period were pushing a report, "Electricity Costs: The folly of wind-power" which broadly coincided with UKIP policy to electricity generation:

> Nuclear power and gas-fired CCGT are therefore the preferred technologies for generating reliable and affordable electricity. There is no economic case for wind-power. (p.ii)

> If it were not for the renewables targets set by the Renewables Directive, wind-power would not even be entertained as a cost-effective way of generating electricity and/or cutting emissions. The renewables targets should be renegotiated with the EU. (p.iv)

The think tanks sober and considered evidence contrasts to the broadly polemic and rumbustious knock about of much of the blog material. All the linked material is consistent in adding to Helmer's case about renewables, and the broader strategy of using Twitter to direct subscribers towards materials establishing his case.

Newspaper coverage

Social media provides only a partial understanding of the political messages of UKIP. The analysis of the newspaper coverage of UKIP reveals a slightly different pattern of engagement but the same controversies. The search using the terms 'UKIP', 'rural' and 'renewables', which produced the commentary on UKIPs activities but also the work of opponents to their policies and campaigns.

The letters sections of several regional newspapers have been an arena in which UKIP's various representatives tackled the question of RE in a rural context and in turn where they were challenged by their opponents. In the aftermath of the local government elections in May 2013 several correspondents wrote to the Hunts Post (Huntingdonshire District, Cambridgeshire) to point out the advance of UKIP because of their opposition to a wind turbine development in the area:

> It is interesting to note that UKIP has claimed several seats in the
> County council elections, including the ward covering this wind farm.
> Could this be because its manifesto included the following?: 'We will
> stand up for local decision-making and fight proposals like unwanted
> housing developments, unwanted out-of-town supermarkets and
> inappropriate energy schemes like incinerators, wind and solar farms
> that will ruin the character of our communities (Wood, 2013).

By grouping RE projects with supermarkets and incinerators, as to be opposed by local people after imposition by those outside of the community, UKIP are suggesting a localist agenda. Another correspondent casts this in party political terms:

> UKIP has taken a stand and rural communities are voting for their candidates because of their anti-wind farm views. In rural communities traditional Conservatives have had enough and the sooner local and national government realise this [the] better.
> I am pleased my newly elected county councillor is from UKIP (Lane-Ley, 2013).

These are the only references to land based renewables in the 12 months of press coverage but in the far west of England, UKIP was busy opposing a proposal for the 'Atlantic Array' of off-shore turbines in the Bristol Channel. The press coverage of the opposition to the array was given a boost when the prospective Parliamentary candidate for the Conservative Party in the area joined the UKIP led campaign:

> This is not a party political issue - I'm not working with Steve [Crowther] under any banner. I'm working with him because of all the work Slay the Array has done in effectively opposing the scheme - he has experience and expertise in this (North Devon Gazette, 2013).

As well as being a local councillor Steve Crowther was at the time the national Chairman of UKIP. Farage had written an opinion piece during the local elections in the South West newspaper committing UKIP to binding referenda on planning applications where one was requested:

> Planning also has a big role to in another of UKIP's key policies, that of energy. The South West is to be blighted by ever increasing quantities of wind farms, both on and off shore. There are highly subsidised, uneconomic, impractical and frankly not worth the money that those who are suffering increased taxes and fuel bills have to pay for them (Farage, 2013).

At the end of November 2013, the developers dropped the planned scheme citing uncertainties about the financing of the scheme, allowing Crowther to announce that this was "a victory for good sense and people power" on the local BBC news (BBC News, 2013).

The other theme that appears in the local press is the debate about climate change denial and with it the opportunity for UKIP candidates to promote other forms of 'renewable energy'. Frederick Rapsey, an unsuccessful UKIP candidate for the County Council elections could thank an earlier letter writer to the East Anglian Daily Times for allowing him to rehearse his enthusiasms, although his correspondent had argued that UKIP's energy policy had been written on the back of one of Mr Farage's 'fag packets':

> Of course it is imperative to properly research whether the current climate change is part of the natural rhythm or accelerated by the intervention of humanity (Rapsey, 2013).

After promoting the possibility that nuclear fusion might be near to realisation and that existing renewables are too expensive, he suggests that others might be considered: "For example - the Severn Barrage: geo-thermal; hydro-electric power from dams (Rapsey, 2013). Unwilling to acknowledge the mockery of his correspondent, Rapsey repeated Helmer's themes of scepticism to climate change and the promotion of unrealised future energy sources

The other theme that the correspondents of UKIP take up about the high price of energy, a burden to domestic consumers and British business alike. Dr Bev Wilkinson in the Yorkshire Post described it thus:

> No wonder Nigel Farage is having a field day at the polls, being the only party leader not to be dazzled in the phoney green headlights of the carbon-free energy myth that is causing the country to swerve into energy impoverished suicide.
>
> Only UKIP seems to be prepared to spell out the reality that our draconian carbon reduction targets are clearly ill thought out and in fact, by all reasonable calculations, incompatible with affordable and available power for this country (Wilkinson, 2013).

As well as the consistent UKIP message about the un-affordability and inefficiency of RE, it illustrates a tactic of all of the UKIP media. The evidence of UKIP success is that its spokespeople and correspondents say that it is being so, and offer only assertions as proof.

Discussion

The analysis of the UKIP media output both on Twitter and the national media reveals a shallowness of engagement with the topic of renewable energy. Shallow in that it would seem from the media coverage that there was only one campaign against a renewable energy project with a noticeable presence of UKIP. There is much claiming of UKIP being in the vanguard of a revolt against renewables, but largely by UKIP spokespeople and candidates with very little evidence presented to support these claims. UKIP does not engage in any depth with rural issues either the politics of rural areas or the politics of the rural other than stereotypes about village pubs (Farage) or passing references to hunting with hounds (Helmer).

The themes pursued are climate change denial or scepticism, an emphasis on the price of energy, the subsidies and visual impacts of renewables and the detachment of elected politicians at national and local levels. Part of this attack is on what they describe as 'political correctness' to undermine what they perceive of the existing consensus. It would seem from this analysis that UKIP is using the issue of renewable energy in an opportunistic manner, claiming through their national spokespeople a leadership that they have not demonstrated. Rather they appear to be attempting to mobilise disillusioned Conservative voters who did not have any allegiance to the Coalition government's policies (Kellner, 2014).

Of wider importance is the way in which UKIP is conforming to larger trend amongst ideological conservatives in questioning climate change and in their tactics in the use of social media (Conover et al., 2012). Many of the tweets analysed for this paper and indeed reported above are 'political content' rather than retweets of others or links to other media. This theme is echoed in the use of the letters pages of local newspapers where they serve as a reinforcement of the key political messages of UKIP's energy policy. In this way, UKIP are engaged not in debate or discussion with their opponents but in repeating their positions. Conover and colleagues describe this as taking the opportunity that social media presents to; "facilitate the rapid dissemination of political frames, making it easy for the main talking points to be communicated directly to a large number of constituents, rather than having to subject messages to the traditional media filter" (Conover et al., 2012:2). This would appear consistent with Helmer's use of Twitter, in that he is directing those following his feed to resources that will enable and inform their arguments. He invests considerable energies in finding confirmatory evidence and argument, as well as creating his political materials. Social media in this instance is not being used to enhance dialogue or debate directly but strengthen the networks of those already of a similar political persuasion.

Conclusion

This paper makes four contributions, one methodological and three concerning the role of social media in political discussions of energy policy and more widely. The analysis of social media has tended towards quantitative methodologies and very large data sets, in a qualitative analysis of a relatively small sample, this paper has sought to establish the utility of analysing social media alongside other forms of political communication. Thorough analysis has determined the strategies of those political actors using social media and how they are crafting their political messages and use of the media to further their project. In these behaviours, they correspond to the tactics used by conservative activists identified in the US. Discourse analysis demonstrates that they are framing topics that are novel to UKIP as adjuncts to the major themes the party relies on for support. Repetition of key messages and communicating with an in-group of supporters is a way of using social media that is distinct from other forms of political communication. Much of this focus appears to be directed to opinion formers working in the print media.

Concerning energy policy, opposition to RE schemes by UKIP is not a reflection of a groundswell of opposition groups, and it certainly does not appear to have a role in initiating or leading such movements. Rather UKIP's role is to attempt to articulate aspects of the various opposition groups and to try to offer to these groups a route to national political representation. It is also quickly apparent that the opposition to RE is about an appeal to the existing landscape as a reflection of national autonomy and a narrow view of the role of rural areas is taken (Lowe & Ward, 2007). The championing
of fracking, fossil fuels and nuclear power is intended as both a provocation and a practical solution, although the contradictions of UKIPs position are never explicitly acknowledged. For example, championing binding local planning referenda could well ensure that none of UKIPs alternatives would be built. Although as an expression of opposition these inconsistencies are less important than providing an outlet for frustrations with the political status quo to be expressed, and this seems to be in line with the desire of many of their supporters (Anstead, 2014).

The position of UKIP is not one of outright rejection of climate change science but to establish doubt about the specifics and methods of assessing climate change. Oreskes and Conway demonstrate how this is entirely consistent with the tactics of free market advocates who have opposed scientific consensus on the harms of cigarette smoke and latterly climate change; "The enemies of government regulation of the marketplace became the enemies of science" (Oreskes & Conway, 2012:262). This does not account for how this doubt is then translated into a wider political sentiment. McCright and Dunlap observe that climate change in North America has become a partisan issue, as conflicts have not been resolved but extended as new issues have arisen. They argue that conservative commentators provide 'elite cues' that others follow and this, in turn, ensures that new issues are presented in a partisan way. The body of social media presented in this paper certainly suggests that this is being attempted in the case of UKIP and climate change, with only evidence that affirms scepticism being shown. This scepticism becomes intertwined as part of a wider framing of an insurgency against the elite and their status quo, which includes the scientific advice they are acting on, not just the adoption of specific technologies or policies.

McCright and Dunlap argue that this opposition to climate change is not going to be overcome by just providing more information but a greater understanding of how information is disseminated and interpreted (McCright & Dunlap, 2011). They suggest that we need to consider that 'anti-reflexive' movements are present in much of contemporary conservative thought, and action, which deserves greater attention from scholars. This paper suggests the means by which such elite cues are being provided in the UK, and how they are included within frames of argument.

The evidence of this paper suggests that UKIP is a very narrowly focused political party that during this period was not effective in creating a constituency of support in rural areas but more focused on influencing conservative thinking. UKIP speaks of, and to, the ideological differences within conservative thinking, rather than wider public debates. It is not that UKIP is especially well organised or influential within these communities, but that they are able through the various media to create the perception that they might be. This tactic reflects the decline in the Conservative control of rural areas, and the shifting politics of rural areas, as well as the broader fragility of the party system that insurgent smaller parties such as UKIP have exposed. The particular case here is not the problem of acceptance of RE schemes within rural areas but the simplifications brought by this form of politics and the exclusionary temptations it will bring to those empowered by such political discourses.

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Reed

Name	Tweets	Retweets
Climate Depot (Think Tank)	27	84
@RogerHelmerMEP		83
Thegwpft (The Global Warming Policy Foundation)	2	57
Dan Hannan MEP	42	51
Nigel Farage MEP	8	47
Sharethis	2	19
UKIP	31	
HashtagerUk (UKIP opponent on Twitter)	27	
James Delingpole (Conservative journalist)	24	25
Ret_ward (Bob Ward – Policy and Communications Director at Grantham Institute on Climate Change)	25	1
Mwt2008 (Mark Tebbutt – zero 'direct fossil fuel use since April 2011')		19
Totals	188	386