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MEDIA & COMMUNICATION STUDIES | RESEARCH ARTICLE

From discontent to action: #quarantinehotel as not just a hashtag

Olga Gjerald^{1*} and Hande Eslen-Ziya²

Abstract: This article shows how Twitter users' discontent with the quarantine hotel regulations in Norway turned into a digital protest. We discuss how the sharing and communication of messages through hashtags on Twitter facilitate the perception of the hashtag as a cultural object that activates a political agenda and perpetuates a digital social movement. This study used a novel approach to explore the significance of the echo chamber of emotions involved in digital protests and introduced stages of digital activism. The paper concludes by arguing that during a protest, the activists employ emotions as self-expressive tools that help them connect the issue at hand to bigger societal issues (structural discrimination and inequalities) and metaphors (prison and criminal behavior). Once this process starts, it further paves the way to reaching out for support, encouraging action from others, and demanding change from the government, as we show via the digital activism framework.

Subjects: Sociology of Media; Gender Inequality; Gender Politics; Human Rights; Mass Communication; Rhetoric; Risk Communication

Keywords: Twitter; digital protest; social movement; COVID-19; quarantine hotels; Norway

1. Introduction

@Regjeringen[government] @erna_solberg @BentHHoyre, can you explain this because the silence around #karantenehotell is deafening. We got an email from border control basically saying, 'meh.' You are the leaders of Norway, lead, and be clear in your comms. [4 December 2020]

You lose your dignity and human rights the moment you step on Norwegian soil #karantenehotell. [22 May 2021]

The COVID-19 outbreak pandemic obliged the governments to take certain measures to prevent the spread of the virus. The introduction of the quarantine hotels, which required travelers to

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This paper highlighted how the discontent with the quarantine hotel regulations in Norway turned into a digital protest on Twitter. It concludes by arguing that during a protest, the activists employ emotions as self-expressive tools that help them connect the issue at hand to bigger societal issues. The research findings will make a significant contribution to decision makers in understanding protest and protest behaviour.

quarantine in government-approved facilities, was one of them. In Norway, the mandatory social isolation, the limitation to travel, and the limitations on freedom of movement by introducing quarantine hotels intensified the discussions around the stringent measures imposed by the government. Twitter was one of the platforms that brought together Norwegians who were dissatisfied with the imposed restrictions. They defended the right to travel and saw quarantine hotels as a major violation of human rights. Soon, Twitter posts turned from mere expressions of discontent into a digital protest where campaigns, petitions, and open letters were distributed to political leaders. We argue that this period of COVID-19 has played a role in bringing together people to go beyond merely discussing the restrictions, discuss societal problems, and push for political action.

As a country with high trust in institutions (Høyer & Mønness, 2016) and little civic unrest, Norway represents a unique case study for digital social movement. Norway is regarded as a highly developed welfare society, with political stability and a distinctly common and non-contradictory political culture (Høyer & Mønness, 2016; Rothstein et al., 2012). Although political distrust of representative institutions is increasing in many contemporary democracies (Stein et al., 2021), institutional distrust has on the contrary decreased in Norway (Torcal, 2014) in the past 15 years. Institutions as national parliament, political representatives, and political parties are perceived as being more responsive to citizens' demands rather than the demands of supranational or international institutions. Societal organizations both provide existing mobilization structures that people can draw on, and articulate perceptions of hardship related to important issues, turning an individual-level grievance into a group phenomenon by politicizing the issue. As state institutions are paramount in shaping people's ability to mobilize and engage in collective action in Norway (Rudolfson, 2021), it may not come as a surprise that there is little civic unrest. One of the very few exceptions is the populist Enough Is Enough movement, started in 2014 in Stavanger. The movement's immediate cause was removing toll road stations in the western part of Norway. The movement later turned into a political party (Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021) which politicized the wider governance of green policies and city planning through the lens of "elite" politicians who were out of touch with "the people." This paper will argue that the online protest that took place during the COVID-19 lock down is another unique portrayal of political unrest in Norway.

By focusing on the #quarantinehotel and #hotelquarantine (#karantenehotell and #hotellkarantene) hashtag on Twitter, this paper claims that the hashtag can be viewed as a cultural object that activates a political agenda and perpetuates, what we call, digital protest, or digital social movement. Protest is a public expression of discontent shared by a large number of people and we argue that such mobilisation can take place in digital platforms and work as a digital protest. In this paper we show that digital platforms help protests not only by calling people to demonstrate on the streets; digital platforms can be the very space that the protests take place. Because it was during the times of COVID-19 and the first year of the pandemic, no public gatherings were allowed in Norway and the protests have solely taken place within the digital realm. This research then studies a unique social movement—solely a digital protest—where the actual mobilisation takes place on digital media (raising awareness, sharing emotions, calling to action etc.). Hence, by examining the Twitter campaign in Norway under this hashtag, we explore how a simple discontent with government restrictions can turn into a powerful social movement when fuelled by emotions. The paper first starts with the role of hashtags in facilitating digitally networked protests, and later, it shows how tweets amplified by emotions serve as a platform to challenge and transform social agendas. We show how social media in general, and Twitter in particular, facilitate the formation of intense affective ties towards a cause, expressive public rituals (like using a common hashtag), and an emotional echo chamber. The emotional-echo chamber theory (Eslen-Ziya et al., 2019, p. 1) emerged from "the concept of echo-chambers existing within the social media where one is exposed only to opinions that agree with their own". According to the theory, the emotions the users share and the digital network they employ echo emotions back and forth. We further discuss how beliefs, motives, and opinions influence participants, contribute to emotional changes during such processes, and

help create an emotional echo chamber. Our analyses further demonstrate the stages of digital activism through the authors' digital activism framework.

2. Social movement theories as the theoretical framework

Social movements are defined as a form of collective behaviour that are performed by a group of people that come together to protest against injustice and challenge the status quo (Isa & Himmelboim, 2018a). They are “spontaneous, unorganized, and unstructured phenomena that were discontinuous with institutional and organizational behaviour” (Morris, 2000, p. 445). Many scholars (like Morris, 1981, 1984; Snow et al., 1980) argue that social movements occur via either non-formal networks or through formal organizations, or existing structures. Scholars talk about how certain resources are employed to recruit participants, coordinate collective action, and motivate them to stay in social movements.

The resource mobilization theory discusses the “significance of outside contributions and the co-optation of institutional resources by contemporary social movements” (Jenkins, 1983, p. 533). They introduce the role of resources (such as time, money, organizational skills, and certain social or political opportunities) as enabling factors for success in social movements (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011; Eslen-Ziya, 2013). While these theories talk about mobilization through rational processes, many others also consider the role of emotions in protest behaviour. For them the role of emotions and irrational ideologies are central in social movements where collective emotions such as anger, resentment as well as excitement, rumour, social contagion, and mass hysteria made people to decide to stay or leave. While such view defines protests behaviour as nonrational and dismiss the role of emotion involved in social movement mobilization (see, Goodwin et al., 2001a; Jasper, 1998), for others (see, Castells, 2015; Jasper, 1998; Von Scheve, 2017; Woods et al., 2012) the emotional component is significant in motivating people to come together and form these movements. They examine how emotions in social movement and protest events play a significant role either by facilitating or hindering protest movements (Eslen-Ziya et al., 2019).

In the recent years however, the increasing occurrences of activism in the digital world (Freelon et al., 2020; Li et al., 2021) has shifted the interest to examining the relationship between the role of digital technologies and social movements. Kaun, 2017, p. 469) for instance, “traces the increasing social acceleration related to (media) technologies employed by protest activists and asks whether there is an increasing desynchronization with their political practices discernible”. Cao (2021) talks about how the digital platforms enabled new paths of social interaction while cutting off others between social movement actors. Later the need to unpack the interaction of protestors with each other as well as their disengagement, and the impact of “filter bubbles” in contemporary fragmentation and polarization in political and civic engagements turned the focus back to the role of emotions in online activism. As Castells (2015, p. 15) puts the Internet has crated “new species of social movement” that are we argue driven by emotions spread in the digital realm. Later in this paper, we will show how the activists use of digital technologies powered with emotions create new forms of online engagement (George & Leidner, 2019). But first, in the coming section we will discuss how digital activism functions as a new form of social movement, where digital tools help to “fuel, spread, and facilitate the fast diffusion of major protests with weak ties” (Schradie, 2018, p. 3). Later we will go into the role of emotions in the evolution of digital collective action and introduce the emotional echo-chamber theory. The paper will continue with the presentation of Twitter data, where we discuss how the resentment of the COVID-19 restrictions turned to social media activism in Norway. We show how social media in general, and Twitter in particular, allow for forming intense affective ties with a cause, staging expressive public rituals (like using a common hashtag) and creating an emotional echo chamber. The paper will conclude—via the digital activism framework—and argue that during a protest, the activists employ emotions as self-expressive tools that help them connect the issue at hand to bigger societal issues (structural discrimination and inequalities) and metaphors (prison and criminal behaviour).

3. Digital activism as a social movement

Over the past decade, the use of digital media platforms for activism has become widely widespread. The Arab Spring, #MeToo movement, Ferguson, and Occupy Wall Street all employed digital tools to bring people together and provide a sense of collective identity needed to create social movements. YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter are glorified for their influence on social movements, mobilizing collective action, organizing crowds, and facilitating civic unrest (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011). According to Zayani (2015), the digital media technologies form that the author called “digital culture of contention” goes beyond the formation of protest and mobilization but helps structure new forms of citizenship and political agency.

While many support digital activism for its technological potential to bring together diverse groups of people, others view it as lacking potential for real change. The political laziness in the comfort of “clicktivism” or “slacktivism” or polarisation of views created through echo chambers has been defined as one of the major downfalls of these technologies (Dumitrica & Felt, 2020). Whether the created and shared social media content becomes a platform allowing people to communicate their opinion struggles and desires or spread misinformation, sarcasm, and hate speech is debated. Though we are fully aware of the downfalls of digital media technologies, our attempt here is to go beyond the conflictual views on the role of digital media defining the Internet either as a product of “imperialist and capitalist logics” or “something that is simultaneously used by millions in the struggle to resist those logics” (Aouragh & Alexander, 2011, p. 1344). Our objective is to study social media as a self-expressive tool with the trajectories of emotions that activists use in social media. For this, we will be analyzing a digital protest taking place on Twitter. We discuss how protestors built solidarity across different boundaries and created a social action by employing social constructionist approaches to emotions.

This article is based on a conceptual framework for understanding digital collective action among Norwegian Twitter users. We focus on the role of united identity and the process of its making. For this, we will take an interactionist approach to study collective action and implementing social and political change and highlight the role of social media in activists’ meaning-making and meaning-construction processes. By focusing on what is shared on social media and the conversation made, we argue, will enable us to discover both personal meaning of story events but also how it gets relatable to the lives and experiences of others (Blevins et al., 2019).

Activism today involves actions advocating political change (Burke & Şen, 2018; Escobar, 1992; Penney & Dadas, 2014). Studying the role of the Internet in facilitating uprisings, Tufekci and Wilson (2012) surveyed the activists taking part in the Tahrir Square protests. They concluded that especially Facebook and Twitter affected their activism. The social media technologies facilitated the participation in the protests, allowing the participants to learn, plan, and document the protests. Much of the digital media scholarship (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Castells, 2015; Howard & Hussain, 2013; Lee & Fong, 2021; Papacharissi, 2016) has viewed digital activism as having transformative power in causing political change through “new networked publics, new forms of connective action cultivating or renewing liberal democratic values and ideals” (Aouragh & Chakravarty, 2016, p. 560). Scholars like Shirky (2011) and Howard et al. (2011) view social media as a vital tool for mobilization to create rebels and help spread ideologies rapidly. It is viewed as faster and more efficient, especially when compared to traditional media.

The #MeToo movement that emerged as a response to sexual harassment is a good example of powerful digital activism and its performative nature (Jenzen et al., 2021; McGarry et al., 2019; Patel, 2019). The #MeToo movement helped feminist sentiments to be shared widely, and its “cultural impact changed the conversation around sexual violence—encompassing sexual harassment, assault or misconduct allegations—and encouraged women to speak up about their experiences (Dobrin, 2020, p. 3). Similarly, Tufekci and Wilson (2012) discussed how the rapid extension of the Internet was seen as a political opportunity quickly adopted in everyday activism in Egypt. They argued that social media allowed for a public sphere to challenge the oppressive government. Its use

spread swiftly and afforded speedy communication between activists within the protest. For them, social media was an easy and cheap means of communication. Reducing the costs of mobilization gave bloggers and Facebook activists a space to be engaged and organized. This space was otherwise restricted due to the suppressive political environment. Hence, Hutchinson (2021) defined digital activism as “a combination of several approaches towards protest, visibility, mobilization, and activity. One way to understand digital activism is through its role in political shifts. Often, digital activism is associated with civil disobedience as denial-of-service attacks, open-source advocacy, hacktivism, or hashtag activism” (p. 37). Social media serves as a common denominator that provides an umbrella for diverse, global actions and movements. For Aouragh and Chakravarty (2016), digital media technologies are an innovative road to democracy.

4. Role of emotions in the evolution of digital collective action

Emotions play a vital role in facilitating or hindering social movements (Goodwin, 1997; Goodwin et al., 2001; Gould, 2009; Jasper, 1998, 2011). As Jasper stated (Jasper, 1998), emotions, ideas, and ideologies help shape individual identities into collective claims. The public becomes affective, shares a common emotion, as the people are “mobilized and connected, identified, and potentially disconnected through expressions of sentiment” (Papacharissi, 2016, p. 311). Emotions then become a driving force in the mobilization of both online and offline social movements.

To fully capture why people participate in protests, we must realize the role of emotions in social movements and protest behavior. Emotions are socially constructed and influenced by contextual factors, and they can be manipulated easily. We will follow Sarah Ahmed’s (2004) conceptualisation of emotions where she claims emotions align individuals with communities through the intensity of their attachments. Emotions mediate the relationship between the individual and the collective. Ahmed argues that emotions work by sticking figures or words together (adherence), a sticking that creates the effect of a collective (coherence). Through the repetition of some sticky words and language, affective associations are created between subjects and hence work by mobilizing negative or positive emotions in a collective.

As emotions are not just individual but also political responses, they are used actively to raise awareness and attract supporters for a cause. Both negative emotions, like anger, resentment, and frustration, and positive emotions, such as pride, joy, and hope, are found in social protests. The texts, photos, and videos on digital media platforms trigger personal experiences and political attitudes, and emotions play a vital role in digital activism. According to Castells (2015), digital media platforms enable “permanent solidarity forums” for contemporary social protests. He emphasized the role of shared sentiments in collective participation, which he referred to as the “emotional activation.” This emotional activation or the expression of emotions on digital media platforms has opened possibilities for self-expression, which enabled online and offline activism. Eslen-Ziya et al. (2019) introduced the emotional echo-chamber theory to discuss the role of emotions in social movements, both online and offline platforms.

The emotional echo chamber theory discusses how beliefs, motives, and opinions help create a collective identity and an emotional echo chamber. The protest behavior supported by expressive rituals and affective ties enables the creation of emotional echo chambers. In return, Eslen-Ziya et al. (2019) argued that this allowed different groups to come together and stay collected during the protests. They talk about how social media become a powerful facilitator to inform the protestors of the events taking place and serves as a tool that transmits emotions from protestors to others. Bennett and Segerberg (2012) argues, participation in such digital networks becomes self-motivating as the content is recognized and shared by who follows them. This allows for the content to be repeated in these networks, creating a sense of solidarity and belonging.

In place of content that is distributed and relationships that are brokered by hierarchical organizations, social networking involves co-production and co-distribution, revealing a different economic and psychological logic: co-production and sharing based on

personalized expression. In this connective logic, taking public action or contributing to a common good becomes an act of personal expression and recognition or self-validation. (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 17)

This paper further argues that social media become the platform where protests occur and emotional echo-chambers form during digital activism. Once the emotions are triggered, just as in any social protest, they are shared by the protestors and transformed. For instance, as the collective emotion of anger gets transformed into a collective emotion of solidarity and hope, the protest behavior is maintained. Here we show how the emotional-echo chamber created during the COVID-19 pandemic in Norway transforms into notions of solidarity and change while triggering emotions like anger and frustration. As we show, this is done via the emotions shared by the users and the digital network created as a result. This digital network created under the common hashtag (in this case #karantenehotell and #hotellkarantene) plays a role in echoing emotions back and forth. The theory depicts how participants' beliefs, motives, and opinions bring forth emotions based on the relationship between emotions and digital protest. Once intense affective ties are formed within the social movement, emotions enable solidarity and even collective identity across different boundaries. The expressive public ritual helps create an emotional echo chamber during a protest, where shared emotions are transmitted back and forth between the protestor groups with different backgrounds and identities. Hence, while emotions exist in every stage of political protest, it transforms as the protest evolves and continues. In return, these self-expressive tools and the trajectories of emotions that activists use in social media may create change.

The following section discusses how the resentment of the COVID-19 restrictions turned to social media activism. We show how social media in general, and Twitter in particular, allow for forming intense affective ties with a cause, staging expressive public rituals (like using a common hashtag) and creating an emotional echo chamber.

5. Method

5.1. Data collection and sample

Twitter—a microblogging service with approximately 500 million users worldwide- was chosen as the source of data collection and subsequent digital narrative analysis. Twitter has become one of the leading global channels for political discussion and deliberation (Garay et al., 2020). It is also the preferred social media platform for voicing demands and mobilizing protest movements due to its interpersonal communication and networking capabilities. To capture specific text explicitly mentioning Norwegian quarantine hotels, the Twitter Full-Archive Service API was used to search for tweets containing hashtags #karantenehotell and #hotellkarantene from 10 November 2020, to 10 September 2021. This time frame was chosen because the quarantine hotel restrictions were in place and debated at that time. A social media monitoring agency undertook the data collection process in September 2021, compiling the data into large spreadsheets. The spreadsheets were later converted into comma-separated value (CSV) format. Tweets and information about the users posting the tweets, their content, language and time stamp, other hashtags used, hyperlinks, number of re-tweets, number of followers, and their geographic location were captured. After eliminating duplicate tweets, 694 tweets remained, including pictures and videos (see, Table 1).

Table 1. The body of tweets scraped from the web

	Text tweets	Videos	Images	Total
#karantenehotell	586	3	74	663
#hotellkarantene	57	1	1	59
After duplicates removed	623	3	68	694

Table 2. Coding of tweets

Main categories and sub-categories	References
1 Defining the problem	232
Government's quarantine hotel regulations	21
Mutual distrust between the government and people	51
Quarantine hotel as a harbinger of the virus rather than protection	34
Quarantine hotel as an occupational hazard	4
Quarantine hotel regulations influence travel intentions	9
Unfair treatment, discrimination, and conflicting rules	90
Violation of human rights of freedom	23
2 Links to different emotions	92
Connecting emotions to institutionalized oppression	31
Sarcasm	27
Venting frustration about the rules	34
3 Ways of reaching out and encouraging action	76
Civil disobedience	19
Encouraging people to voice their opinions	17
Supporting media coverage and debates about quarantine hotel regulations	11
Quarantine hotel is against the constitution—say no to penalties	5
Searching and giving support and asking for help	19
Voicing disagreements	5

5.2. Data analysis

For the content analysis of the tweets, the qualitative data analysis software Nvivo12 was used. Once the personal identifiers were removed to protect the anonymity of the users, coding was done, and the tweets were translated into English. The software was then used to systematically code and analyze the raw data and develop and integrate the emerging analytical categories and themes. Content analysis allows for flexibility in using a combination of inductive and deductive approaches. The first author completed the first coding of tweets to generate initial coding categories and codes. The codes and categories were then discussed with the co-author. Codes were adjusted as new conceptions appeared, and connections between the codes were established during the discussions. The first author then coded the remaining body of tweets. When the authors agreed on the codes, sub-categories, and main categories, quotes representing the categories were added to illustrate the relationships between categories, codes, and tweets. The thematic content analysis of the tweets revealed three main categories: 1) defining the problem (why what, and how to quarantine regulations were problematic); 2) links to different emotions; 3) ways of reaching out and encouraging action (see, Table 2 for all categories emerging from the captured tweets).

The themes that emerged from the analysis allowed us to identify narratives and counter-narratives regarding the quarantine regulations and temporal shifts in narratives and counter-narratives. These themes represented the participants' understanding of the changes in quarantine regulations, the unfolding situation, their emotions and social support, encouragement of others, and issues they fought.

6. Findings: Online participation through hashtags #karantenehotell and #hotellkarantene

You are treated like a criminal and have no rights or possibility to appeal [30 May 2021].

It feels like the Gestapo is at work here, with private security #karantenehotell [13 December 2020].

This section discusses the different stages of digital activism, where emotions play a major role in building resistance and calling for action against the restrictions imposed by the government. We show how digital activism draws attention to a disputed issue within the Norwegian political climate and ultimately lifts some restrictions. We also discuss how other platforms, such as blogs, TV debates, and opinion pieces in online and mainstream media, supported Twitter participation or digital activism. This section is structured around the main categories emerging from our analysis.

6.1. Defining the problem

The analyzed tweets provide descriptions and pictures of the conditions at the quarantine hotels: overfilled garbage cans, boxes with food placed on the floor outside the hotel rooms, and costly stays.¹ The hotels are described as places reminiscent of internment facilities. Tweets are saying that it is close to impossible to comply with social distancing requirements there:

Full chaos and people too close in line before checking in at quarantine hotel [4 June 2021].

Overall, quarantine hotels are depicted in the tweets as something that puts one in danger of getting the virus rather than protecting them from it:

Pretty sure (of getting infected) at #karantenehotell [29 May 2021].

Indeed, healthy on arrival and ill once you come out. They are now sending people off on buses to Oslo hotels. How is that sanitary? We haven't taken a damn bus in London in 9 months #karantenehotell [12 December 2020].

The rules about mandatory quarantine stay changed frequently during 2020 and continued to be an issue of public interest throughout 2021. Initially, any non-residents arriving in Norway from a country deemed “red” by the Norwegian Institute of Public Health needed to undergo 10 days of self-quarantine at home, regardless of symptoms or a recent test result. However, on 6 November 2020, the requirements were tightened. Any non-residents entering the country had to show a negative COVID-19 test taken in the previous 72 hours, and those arriving from “red” countries had to quarantine a designated quarantine hotel.

The rules and regulations of mandatory quarantine were perceived by the Twitter users as inconsistent and conflicting, with constant changes that were difficult to follow. Therefore, the tweets reflected this unclear environment where the rules and the understanding were vague, and even the authorities did not always know what to do. This was evident in the following tweets:

The COVID-19 regulations have changed 199 times. #karantenehotell [10 June 2021].

Misleading SMS from Helsedirektoratet [the Health Directorate, link]. Noticeable that #helsedirektoratet is demonstrably misinforming about. #karantenehotell [24 July 2021]

Twitter users stated that this made them feel powerless and confused:

You feel completely overwhelmed and lawless. #karantenehotell [5 June 2021]

These tweets complained about the government making decisions at the highest level, while no one at lower levels knows how to deal with the information.

Around November 2020, the government categorized the travel as “necessary” or “unnecessary.” This, in return, created a polarization between the so-called ordinary citizens whose traveling needs were seen as trivial compared to the “important” people, comprising football players, artists, and political figures, who *had* to travel. As the latter group could justify their travel, the former's wishes to meet with their family and loved ones were seen as not necessary enough:

I don't think that the football players have been in #quarantinehotel. But of course, they are more important than our parents, who are not allowed to stay with us ... they are dangerous foreigners #coronationalism [11 November 2021].

The following tweet was addressed specifically to Prime Minister Erna Solberg and health minister Bent Høyre.

How can you not understand that visiting your family is a necessary travel, Erna and Bent? This has gone too far! @BentHHoyre @erna_solberg #karantenehotell #dax18 #korona [30 April 2021].

This polarization further amplified public opinion about quarantine rules being “so random, so meaningless.”

These tweets further pointed out that the introduction of necessary and unnecessary travel was not effective in preventing the spread of the virus because it did not differentiate people according to their reasons for traveling. Subsequently, the content of the shared tweets developed into a more philosophical discussion of what was right and wrong. Hence, as the Twitter users started attributing meaning to the situation, they became more involved. We argue that this might be the start of digital activism. Fair vs. unfair treatment was one of the most frequent topics mentioned in the tweets. Changing rules made the Twitter users see quarantine regulations as unfair.

Not only absurd but also unfair. A bit of logic and compassion could be useful [3 June 2021].
The quarantine hotel arrangement is absurd [10 June 2021].
Random, unfair, unbelievable, extremely frustrating [2 June 2021].
Europe's strictest rules [30 May 2021].

After a short while, the issue of discrimination surfaced in the tweets, arguing that quarantine hotels discriminate against people based on social class, origin, citizenship, occupation, and even the type of vaccine.² Combined, these factors created an intersectional inequality.

Class discrimination is introduced here between those who own and those who rent. This has nothing to do with infection control #karantenehotell [1 December 2021].

What kind of 'discretionary assessments? That you look sick? Or too poor to have a suitable place to quarantine at home? [2 June 2021]

The inconsistencies, the perceived unfairness and randomness of the rules, and perceived discrimination created a feeling of mutual distrust between the government and the bloggers on Twitter.

The question one must ask is, 'Are they honest about their intentions and competence?' [3 June 2021]
[Quarantine hotel is] The opposite of infection control, the opposite of common sense, the opposite of trust in Norwegian citizens. [8 June 2021]

Disappointment in Norway as a democratic society and the Norwegian government was expressed in several tweets.

This has gone too far! @BentHHoyre @erna_solberg [30 April 2021]
Messy, unreasonable. Erna is losing grip. [2 June 2021]
We are no longer a democracy. [3 June 2021]
This is so weak of the Ministry of Justice! [28 May 2021]
The government's time is out in September. The same goes for the leaders of the Norwegian Directorate of Health. 'Management by fear' will no longer be possible. [21 May 2021]

The tweets further pointed out how quarantine hotel rules can be seen as a violation of human rights and in conflict with the existing law.

Why is your country violating human rights? [3 December 2021]

Quarantine hotel is illegal. [4 June 2021]

[Allowed]4 hours outside – where is the legislation for this @Helsedir [Ministry of Health]? [29 May 2021]

Violations of basic human rights come in many forms. From the most horrible to the somewhat less horrible ... #karantenehotell [20 November 2021]

You lose your dignity and human rights the moment you step on Norwegian soil. [22 May 2021]

In an opinion piece entitled “Norwegian quarantine hotels: Infection control or penal measure?” published in March 2021 by Peace Research Institute Oslo’s blog section, Bretthauer et al. (2021) agreed with these tweets. They explained that being forced to quarantine in a small hotel room can be considered a deprivation of physical liberty under Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights and is a form of torture. They also pointed out that the 10-day quarantine is a long time, and no system is in place to assess the mental well-being of people isolated during the quarantine period (Bretthauer et al., 2021). Some tweets drew attention to the other side of this issue, namely, emphasizing how quarantine hotels represent an occupation hazard. They argued that hospitality employees were not trained to enforce quarantine rules or attend to physically or mentally ill guests. It was also mentioned that the hotel staff themselves were in danger of getting infected.

Moreover, some Twitter users explicitly wrote how they feared for their physical and mental health if they had to quarantine in a hotel. They were afraid of being infected and panicked because they did not trust the hotel facilities to provide a safe enough environment.

I was terrified of being infected in #karantenehotell [16 June 2021]

I have OCD, so I can ensure better infection control for myself than NFI (Norwegian Institute of Public Health), and I get panicky when I think about staying in a hotel room with closed windows. I am on necessary travel, although you do not categorize my travel as necessary. [4 June 2021]

These tweets reflected our participants’ inner world, as they defined and discussed the issue and its impact on society and expressed their fears and worries. The next section is devoted to how they are linking their criticism to their emotions.

6.2. Links to different emotions

The tweets depicted a broad range of primary and secondary emotions, including fear (e.g., of getting infected), helplessness (e.g., asking for help to understand the issues), frustration (e.g., about the changing rules), anger (e.g., towards the government), resentment (e.g., missed opportunities to visit their family or to go abroad), skepticism (e.g., doubts about the success of the quarantine restrictions), loneliness (e.g., not being able to see their loved ones or go home for Christmas), and depression (e.g., feeling miserable). While primary (or basic) emotions are the most fundamental and direct reactions to an event or a situation (e.g., fear, joy, sadness, surprise, anger), secondary (or complex) emotions are responses that follow the primary emotions and are socially constructed (Demoulin et al., 2004). Looking at the timeline of the tweets shared, confusion was one of the earliest (secondary) responses that surfaced, see, Table 3.

This is understandable, as quarantine hotel rules was something novel, and people did not know what to expect. Along with feeling confused by quarantine regulations, people searched for help and needed support to understand the rules. They felt sad and lonely, realizing that they would not see their loved ones for a long time. Our analyses show a change in the mood of the tweets from

Table 3. Timeline of typical tweets representing each emotion

“Primary” emotion	“Secondary” emotion	Example of tweets	Time
Surprise	Confusion	Have not received any documentation on who I can contact but was only placed here with the words that I will stay here for 10 days without contact with other people. What about my children? @politietost #karantenehotell	14 November, 2020
	Anxiety	I was in a quarantine hotel for 9 hours before I went back to Copenhagen. Have been sleepless every night since! Very stressful to be deprived of passports and rights on the wrong basis. #samværsrett #karantenehotell	28 November, 2020
Fear	Uncertainty	Counting down the days till the decision on whether the mandatory quarantine hotel regulation will remain as is, and whether my partner and I will be able to go home to Norway for xmas, is the most #COVID19 advent calendar. #karantenehotell #hotelkarantene #polkvart #korona	3 December, 2020
	Fear	It feels like the gestapo is at work here, with private security #karantenehotell	13 December, 2020
Interest	Support	More on the #karantenehotell if people are following the hashtag. It seems it was a 30-day rule and if the government wants an extension from 6th December, they have to get it to pass parliament again.	3 December, 2020
	Rage	Indeed, healthy on arrival and ill once you come out. They are now sending people off on buses to Oslo hotels. How is that sanitary? We haven't taken a damn bus in London in 9 months #karantenehotell	13 December, 2020
	Rage	It is directly outrageous that people living in Norway, who do not pose a risk of infection after ten days at #karantenehotell, are still denied entry. It can be impossible to justify with #smittevern [infection control]! Shocking that no one in the government of @erna_solberg promises change	22 April, 2021

(Continued)

Table3. (Continued)

“Primary” emotion	“Secondary” emotion	Example of tweets	Time
Anger	Frustration	Communication nonsense!! Be honest, answer YES or NO. Whatever the answer, it will be much more trustworthy than this nonsense here! #karantenehotell	13 December 2020
	Scepticism	So, is there really any difference between #karantenehotell and prison? Like in practice. If not, is it not quite dramatic that Norwegian citizens are imprisoned for a minimum of eight days because the authorities do not think they have made a necessary journey? #nyeregler	23 March, 2021
	Resentment	Five hours in line, jammed together, to be sorted, treated as criminals, denied access to the toilet . . . Everything here is the opposite of infection control, the opposite of reason, the opposite of trust in us. Hope someone can take it to court! #hotelkarantene	7 June, 2021
Anticipation	Anger	What is this? Stop treating people like rubbish. #Karantenehotell is not about infection control! @erna_solberg @Folkhelseinst @Government	8 June, 2021
	Vigilance	On 27 May, Geir Woxholth wrote a very good article about the situation of fully vaccinated Norwegians who are imposed #karantenehotell upon entry into Norway. It was on May 27 but is no less relevant now. Is it time for civil disobedience?	2 June 2021
Trust	Acceptance	The moral of the story probably is that if you are at a #karantenehotell, don't expect the system to work. You have to be fully aware of your rights and be a nuisance in demanding them.	2 June 2021

confused and sad to angry as the frustration with the changing quarantine rules grew. Resentment towards the government shifted to a more hostile attitude. They expressed their skepticism about the quarantine hotel arrangement and criticized the government's approach to the COVID-19 fight in general. This was also when media started covering the issues extensively, and the quarantine hotels became the hot topic of a prime-time debate on the public broadcaster Norwegian Broadcast Corporation, NRK.

As time passed, emotions like anger and resentment towards the government fueled by the emotions like fear of being infected or losing loved ones were associated with institutionalized oppression. This was evident from the users comparing the quarantine hotels to prisons and even concentration camps.

You do not STAY at #karantenehotell! = [it is] synonym for prison, internment, punishment, deprivation of liberty. [5 June 2021]
#karantenehotell is #konsentrasjonsleir [concentration camp] of 2021.
A fully vaccinated student from the US with a vaccine passport must stay in prison for 10 days. [28 May 2021]

They emphasized that some were chased by the police patrol car with “blue lights, like criminals!” They said they were forced to stay in quarantine hotels and treated like criminals with no rights. These tweets used words with clear negative connotations, such as “incarcerated” and “deported.”

Why does the @government @erna_solberg @BentHHoyre distrust the rest of the population and me so that we must be interned at #karantenehotell? [26 May 2021]
At the request of the border police, you can risk paying 14 000 NOK to be detained. [29 May 2021]

Some tweets also used humor and sarcasm to get attention to the issue. The following are some examples of these sarcastic tweets:

It is not that bad—I've got a room where I can open a window. [10 June 2021]

If you want your 15 min of fame, tell the world how 'unfair' it is that you have to stay in a quarantined hotel. [22 May 2021]

I finally got the government's strategy to stop the virus. Fully vaccinated travelers stop the virus from spreading among employees in quarantine hotels. A bit circumstantial, but creative! [29 May 2021]

Some had gifs and pictures portraying government members or sarcastically referring to the “breakfast at a quarantine hotel.”



People are literally waiting to be told they are free. [21 May 2021]

Several Twitter users attached #VisitNorway along with sarcastic messages such as “welcome to Norway today.”



Yes, welcome in [sic!] Norway today. [29 May 2021]

Once these emotions connected to bigger societal issues (like discrimination and inequalities) and metaphors (like a prison and criminal behavior) expressed with irony, they triggered support and encouragement from others, demanding change from the government.

6.3. Reaching out and encouraging action

The reaching out category consists of tweets that encourage action from others and demand change from the government. The tweets were asking for consistency and challenged the government and the health authorities to act with integrity. They urged the government to be honest and firm in its principles. They uttered, “*you are the leaders of Norway. Lead, and be clear in your comments!*”

They also encouraged others to voice their opinions and join the cause, tweeting links to media coverage and newspaper articles showing public figures disapproving of government decisions regarding quarantine hotel regulations. They tweeted:

Norwegian diplomats upset about having to stay at a quarantine hotel. [5 June 2021]

Mair of Lillehammer reacts to the government’s new regulation on quarantine hotels. [4 June 2021]

Mair refuses to offer quarantine hotel. [3 June 2021]

These posts were significant, as they showed that Twitter users were not alone and were supported. As a result, Twitter users became more confident and clearer in their demands.

I decided to quarantine at home and not in a quarantined hotel. [8 June 2021]

Nor can I nor will I participate in this #karantentehotell. [7 June 2021]

Twitter users started calling for civil disobedience, a form of resistance without violence, which involved refusing to obey a law or a regulation peacefully. This is usually done because the law or the regulation is seen as unjust.

Do not expect the system to work. You must be fully aware of your rights and become a nuisance in demanding them. [2 June 2021]

Is it time for civil disobedience? [8 June 2021]

They urged others not to stay in quarantine hotels or not to pay fines if they were caught.

Do not pay penalties for breaking the quarantine hotel regulations. [3 June 2021]

They further posted links to blogs and media articles about people who refuse to quarantine at hotels and people who get fined for not complying with the rules.

What about asking quarantine hotel employees about PCR tests? If not, go home and stay there.

How about the person checking in at #karantenehotell, asking for a written guarantee that the hotel staff is infection-free? If not, ask for a written confirmation that they cannot guarantee it. Take the confirmation and do the quarantine at home. [3 June 2021]

The criticisms of the government and the use of emotions in conjecture with inequalities turned online discomfort into an online protest. The support received from public figures as well as the other media sources made these protestors stronger. We argue that this enabled their voices to be heard, resulting in the Norwegian government putting the quarantine hotel regulations on the agenda for further discussions. The hearing about the quarantine hotel restrictions became an attempt to review the regulations and make them more in line with the existing situation. At the beginning of December 2020, the government sent out a consultation proposal to the public, where citizens could express their opinions about quarantine rules and suggest changes for quarantine hotel regulations (Government.no, 2020). The response window was relatively short—just a couple of days—but the response was “enormous,” and more than 300 people submitted their views (Hellesnes, 2020).

The government proposed that those who could prove that they had a reasonable accommodation in Norway could stay there during the quarantine period. However, the housing had to be “suitable” for quarantine; specifically, it had to have a private room and access to own bathroom, kitchen, or dining facilities to avoid close contact with others. According to the proposal, travelers needed to prove that they had a place to stay during the quarantine period that meets the requirements to avoid staying at a quarantined hotel. When explaining why this public hearing was taking place, the Minister of Justice stated in a press brief³:

‘Some of the current rules have been criticized and perceived as unfair. I understand this, which is why we are sending the proposal for a short consultation. The changes will be made as soon as possible.’

We argue that this hearing was a major success of the twitter protests. Since it was an open hearing and everyone could voice their opinions, Twitter protestors encouraged others to voice their discontent and get loud. They posted links to guide the followers and share their opinions with the government.

Anyone interested in the #karantenehotell saga in #Norway can now make their views known via the following consultation [link to Ministry of Justice and Public Security pages about the consultation]. [10 December 2020]

In May 2021, a petition campaign received over 15 thousand signatures from people all over Norway and Sweden, Denmark, Poland, and Spain. The petition was against quarantine hotel regulations, arguing that the system of the quarantine hotels does not work and will not be accepted. The same petition was also shared on Facebook. Moreover, Twitter users frequently referred to media coverage of quarantine hotel regulations in major Norwegian news channels and features with explicit titles:

A fight against quarantine hotels [link to a tabloid feature] [4 June 2021]

They called to action against the government, asking residents to become part of a movement that eventually resulted in a lawsuit.

#Dagsrevyen Soon [time for a] class action against the state ad #karantenehotell. This is the internment of people without judgment! [29 May 2021]

Nine hundred sixty-one people filed suit against the government for ‘intervening measures’ in quarantine hotels. [link to a tabloid feature] [4 June 2021]

On June 4, the biggest Norwegian tabloid VG published a feature piece entitled “The fight against quarantine hotels” about the people who filed a lawsuit against the Norwegian state for the quarantine hotel claim. More than NOK 400,000 had been collected to try the case in court. These all illustrate the powerful digital activism that escalated the debate on quarantine hotels and forced the government to consider this protest. The next section outlines the stages of activism that led to success via the introduction of the digital activism framework.

7. Discussing through the digital activism framework

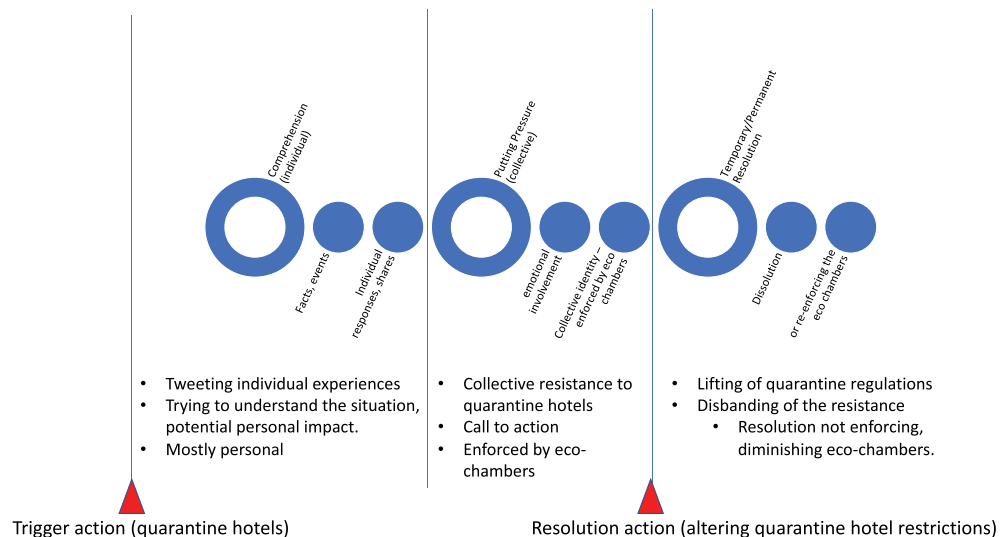
Our analyses have identified several stages of digital activism. As depicted in the digital activism framework in Figure 1, the first step in the digital movement involved gathering allies that support the cause and getting it recognized.

Our Twitter users did this by first defining and describing the problem and later explaining their effect on society. In this process, they used the information provided by the other media platforms, both online and offline, to support their views. They also referred to public figures who were against the quarantine hotel restrictions. They talked about the discrimination and inequalities that the regulations were causing and their emotional effects.

Emotions are very important in developing social movements as they determine whether or not protestors will join or leave the fight. As Goodwin (1997) points out, it is through emotions that social movements are facilitated. It helps shape ideologies and gives weight to these ideologies, where participants feel they share collectively. This was also the case in our research min which emotions like anger, frustration, and fear enabled people to share their experiences and relate to the experiences of others. As they actively participated on Twitter, they realized they were not alone. Eslen-Ziya et al. (2019) described that the collective identity created through the emotional echo chambers became a driving force in this online mobilization.

We observed how anger first turned into hope and later into action demanding change. We argue that this initiated the second stage of the digital activism framework that we call influence creation. The Norwegian government started reconsidering the strict quarantine hotel regulations and eventually concluded that it was no longer mandatory to quarantine at hotels. We see this as the success of these online activists because the government heard and listened to them. Once

Figure 1. The digital activism framework.



the success, which we refer to as the third stage in our digital activism framework, was achieved, the sharing of the tweets ceased. However, it is yet to be seen whether another discomfort will trigger the movement again.

8. Conclusion

This article attempted to demonstrate how Twitter users' discontent with the quarantine hotel regulations in Norway turned into a digital protest. We showed how they captured and communicated their messages through sharing of texts as well as images on Twitter. This article makes a unique contribution to knowledge on social protests, as it studies a digital social movement in Norway, a country with very little civic unrest and few protest movements. Thus, our findings provide an empirical insight into how trust in state institutions actually assists the protesters in starting the digital protest and achieving results. Our analyses of posted and re-circulated tweets on quarantine hotels in Norway revealed that emotions play an important role in communicating the problem and protesting. Additionally, we showed how these emotions were used to later discuss politicized issues, like migration or the creation of the "us/them" binary. The online protesters tweeted about the discrimination and inequalities that the regulations were causing and their emotional effects. Looking at the timeline of the tweets shared, confusion was one of the earliest emotions that surfaced. This is understandable, as quarantining at hotels was something novel, and people did not know what to expect. Being scared of quarantine regulations, we showed that triggered people sought support from others. They felt sad and lonely, realizing that they would not be able to see their loved ones for a long time. Our analyses revealed a change in the mood of the tweets from confused and sad to angry as the frustration with the changing quarantine rules grew. In our analysis we reconstructed a timeline of typical tweets and emotions they represent. We highlighted both secondary emotions (socially constructed emotional responses, such as anxiety, uncertainty, frustration, annoyance, scepticism) and primary emotions (direct emotional reaction to events, such as surprise, fear, anger). Building on the emotional-echo chamber theory, we showed that Twitter shifted from being polarising to unifying. In other words, the activists used the emotions as self-expressive tools that helped them connect the issue at hand to bigger societal issues (like structural discrimination and inequalities) and metaphors (like a prison and criminal behavior). Once this process started, it prompted support, encouraging others to act and demanding change from the government.

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Endnotes

1. Adult quarantine hotel residents must pay 500 NOK (appr. 50 USD) per night.

2. Norway did not accept certain vaccines, and to this date, it still does not accept the Sputnik V.
3. Press brief Nr: 248-2020, accessed 1 November 2021, from <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumentarkiv/regjeringen-solberg/aktuelt-regjeringen-solberg/jd/pressemeldinger/2020/koronasituasjonen-foreslar-enderinger-i-reglene-om-karantenehotell/id2791174/>

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