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Thursday, 17 May 2018

Understanding #FeesMustFall: Starting a qualitative data analysis



My interest and that of other researchers into the student movement - like [Tanja Bosch](#), a professor and expert in communication studies, media studies and youth at UCT - is in the different uses of different platforms of social media during movement campaigns like #FeesMustFall; the different audiences, etc.; and the significance of the use of social media for the specific character and successes and failures of the student movement.

Just yesterday, my colleague [Nkululeko Makhubu](#) and I got an interesting lesson in social movement theory by [Luc Chicoine](#), a visiting scholar from the University of Quebec, Montreal, Canada, - remember the Maple Spring? He introduced us to the concepts of 'framing' and different types of frame alignment, cycles of protests and contention (by Makhadam as he pronounces it), etc. all adding to the seminar he gave earlier this week at the HSRC on protest event analysis. Yes, it is acronymed to number 1.

Today now, [Travis Noakes](#) (nope, he is not banting at the moment I asked :), gave all of us, that's Prof Bosch, Makhubu and me, a workshop in using Nvivo 12 for analysing our data. It's a process - and it has its own language... nodes, nodes, child nodes, parent nodes. Seems very time-consuming, but, as the wordcloud above shows, it may actually be worth it.

What's the point? Eventually, the close to 500k tweets we got as digital trace data from the net will be connected to a qualitative database, and all that feed into getting a better understanding of the amazingly creative way, student activists in 2015 invented a South African 'internet-age networked student movement' (yes, I coined that term :). Never mind the remarks about the 'anti-social media' by [Prof Jonathan Jansen](#) in his 2016 book. The point is, listen and you won't get burnt - [as by fire](#). But it has always been difficult for principals to listen to the children in their care...

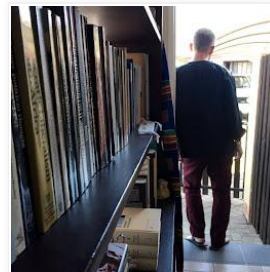
As we are starting to talk to student leaders at UCT about the use of social media during the 2015/16 South African Student Spring (as Ferial Haffajee calls it in her [first excellent book What if there were no Whites in South Africa](#)) we are getting a striking cloud of words. This is very, very rough. But I thought it is worth sharing... That students see their movement as a social movement first and foremost, linked with Twitter and Facebook, Rhodes, leadership, and so forth. Follow our project @osphera #FeesMustFall

at May 17, 2018

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