

Research video: Dr Stephen Jeffares - #Hashtag Politics

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Hi, I'm Dr Stephen Jeffares from the Institute of Local Government Studies at the University of Birmingham.

For the last few years I have been interested in how policy makers deliberately create a label or brand for a policy initiative or idea. Anything from New Deal in the 1930s to Third Way in the 1990s.

More recently big society or one nation. But in an era of social media and rapid online discussion I call this kind of activity hashtag politics.

Never has it been cheaper and easier to rapidly communicate policy to a wide audience, yet never has it been easier to critique or undermine the initiative. In this game of hashtag politics for every main initiative we remember, several more wither in this environment. Within minutes of announcing an initiative jokes, alternative hashtags will circulate and gain momentum.

I think policy makers are resilient, they'll go back to their drawing board they'll rebranding HS2 as NorthSouthRail Bedroom tax -spare room subsidy - privatising probation/transforming rehabilitation.

I think just focusing on the successful hashtags is not the way to go the ones that last several years and are remembered decades later will not give us insight into why some hashtags succeed and others fail.

At INLOGOV we're interested in week one - the first few days - capturing the discussion and exploring any signs of an early shape of the debate. To understand this we need to draw on the advances in online tools for crowdsourcing viewpoints and classifying and categorising and indexing millions of social media items but all these tools are now available to us.

More information

Interpreting Hashtag Politics: policy ideas in an era of social media will be published by Palgrave in April 2014. [Preorder \(http://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/1137357738\)](http://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/1137357738) or follow [@srjeffares](https://twitter.com/srjeffares)

INLOGOV Blog: [The Big Society lasted 1000 days. Will we ever see ideas of its like again? \(schools/government-society/departments/local-government-studies/news/2014/02/big-society.aspx\)](http://www.inlogov.org.uk/news/2014/02/big-society.aspx) (includes link to the new book) and more information is on Dr Stephen Jeffares blog: <http://jeffar.es/> (<http://jeffar.es/>).

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