

# Temporalizing the refraction chamber - tracking drone-related issues on twitter



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# Research Question



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RQ: What is missing in the mapping of issues in Twitter?  
How can we build a research timeline for mapping political issues?

Twitter is seen as a diffusion agent in political events and social movements, a proxy for information plurality (Rieder 2012)

However, Twitter is mainly about the here and now (the user interface, platform specificity, temporal patterns of use etc.)

# Twitter and the Refraction Chamber



## *From Diffusion To Refraction*

Media diffusion theory sees Twitter as an infrastructure, pipelines for information diffusion (tweets).

Twitter is a space between reproduction and mutation.

The most successful tweets are most often those that add a 'twist' to the topic and 'spin' it in a certain way, i.e., that 'refract' it." (Rieder 2012:9)

Refracting is about medium regeneration or re-articulation: A process for collective re-negotiation.

# 'There is more than one way to imagine a drone'



*"Drones as things enter into our world through the ways in which they are talked about, but also the way they are represented, repeated and circulated. They become objects and images through which we think."*

Elspeth Van Veeren (2013)

## **Competing and conflicting visions of the drone.**

*"...technologies are not just for "organising" information, they are also for revealing it, for telling us something new about the world around us, rendering it more clearly."*

James Bridle (2012)

Creator of Dronestagram

# Drone Twitter Space by Month



Lists colored by frequency, original order



December	January	February	March	April	May	June
obama	pakistan	replacesongtitlewithdrone	standwithrand	yemen	obama	tcot
iran	yemen	tcot	replacemovienamewithdrone	pakistan	pakistan	pakistan
pakistan	obama	obama	tcot	tcot	tcot	obama
us	ndaa	sotu	filibuster	israel	us	nsa
news	us	p2	randpaul	nodrones	news	pti
tcot	news	ndaa	obama	dronewars	yemen	us
yemen	mqm	dorner	ndaa	news	benghazi	yemen
ndaa	tcot	news	pakistan	obama	pti	news
guncontrol	mali	us	yan	us	gitmo	fbi
yan	p2	tlot	p2	boston	usa	stopdrones
anonymous	politicaldrone	pakistan	3pik	p2	guantanamo	prism
newtown	cia	cia	onerationunderdrones	aprildays	irs	snowden
usa	fisa	nodrones	news	tlot	somalia	usa
p2	usa	brennan	tlot	cia	stopdronestrikes	cia
israel	un	tgdn	us	educacionliberadora	p2	pmln
gaza	surveillance	yemen	replacemovienameswithdrone	syria	eeuu	g8
ows	war	iran	nodrones	ndaa	tech	surveillance
eeuu	afghanistan	teaparty	tgdn	afghanistan	taliban	ndaa
tlot	ows	usa	cia	usa	noticias	p2
afghanistan	stopdrones	privacy	teaparty	hezbollah	nodrones	irs
war	mlk	uniteblue	tech	tech	gitmobama	tech
warcrimes	cuba	lapd	gop	lebanon	pmln	benghazi
cia	tlot	nwo	benghazi	teaparty	obamascandalmovies	privacy
nwo	brennan	anonymous	filiblizzard	cispa	israel	youknowyoureamericanwhenyou
tech	eeuu	gop	privacy	youjustpulledanobama	ttp	syria
noticias	karachi	surveillance	surveillance	bostonmarathon	yan	eeuu

# Material object (December)



## - Drone as (displaced) geopolitical technology

rt @ap: breaking: iran state tv claims revolutionary guard has captured another u.s. drone in iranian airspace - 12/4/2012

rt @bbcbreaking: us navy says no american drones missing after iranian reports that one was captured over gulf

"is obama arming iran with high tech us military drones[?]"



# Hashtag hijacking (December)



- Drones, gun control and libertarian politics



rt @realalexjones: #guncontrol why doesn't #obama hold press conferences and cry when he murders innocent children with drone strikes? - 12/14/2012

[Alex Jones @RealAlexJones 14 Dec](#)  
[#GunControl](#) Obama fakes crying; pure exploitation by the corrupt ruling class that wants to disarm us

# Twitter meme (February)



## - Drone as Twitter-meme

eight drones a week  
#replacesongtitlewithdrone

drone go breaking my heart  
#replacesongtitlewithdrone

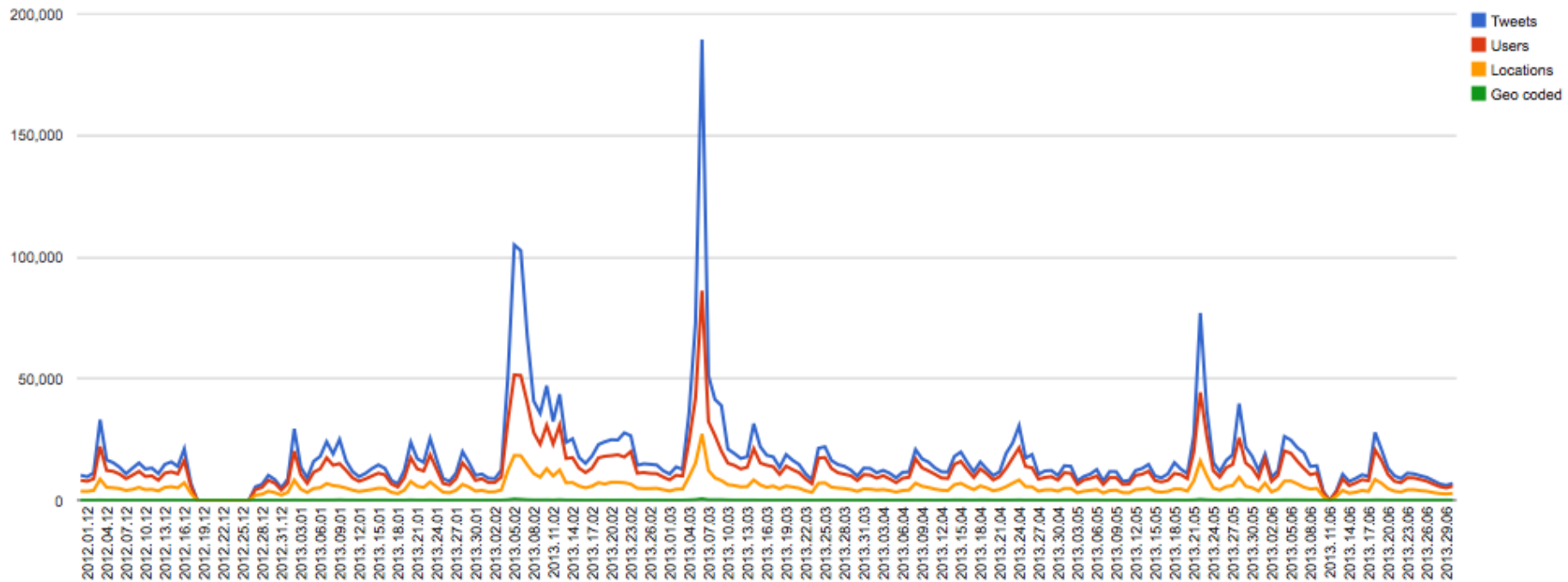
if you don't drone me by now  
#replacesongtitlewithdrone

you can drone your own way  
replacesongtitlewithdrone





# Drone dataset



Date and time are in GMT (London).

## Lists colored by frequency, original order

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1.3-7.3#FRQ	8.3-14.3#FRQ	15.3-21.3#FRQ	22.3-28.3#FRQ
obama	standwithrand	pakistan	pakistan
tcot	tcot	news	news
ndaa	randpaul	cia	gop
sequester	p2	us	obama
iamnotadictator	ndaa	tcot	tcot
government	filibuster	un	niger
spy	obama	virginia	us
us	gop	iran	nodrones
pakistan	tlot	eeuu	vlsriticalmass
p2	newtown	obama	cia
thingididntknowlastweek	teaparty	pjnet	ndaa
ihc	tdsbreakingnews	targetedkilling	tech
saddrseuss	tgdn	usa	privacy
tlot	news	p2	surveillance
news	cia	tlot	teamfollowback
aiaacauav	uniteblue	standwithrand	military
jamaat	benghazi	noticias	africa
taliban	nodrones	foia	technology
sciamblogs	brennan	infowars	nwo
ucsb	libertario	ndaa	war
nazi	privacy	onu	tlot
china	imawackobirdbecause	tech	p2
surveillance	stewwebb	cnn	yemen
sequestermovielines	standwithran	teamfollowback	usa
benghazi	us	stopdrones	america
teaparty	pakistan	ff	afghanistan
privacy	usa	privacy	noticias
yemen	lnyhbt	surveillance	socialmedia

# March - Filibuster and #standwithrand



Drones turn the discourse inwards.

From a foreign affairs issue to a civil liberties affair.

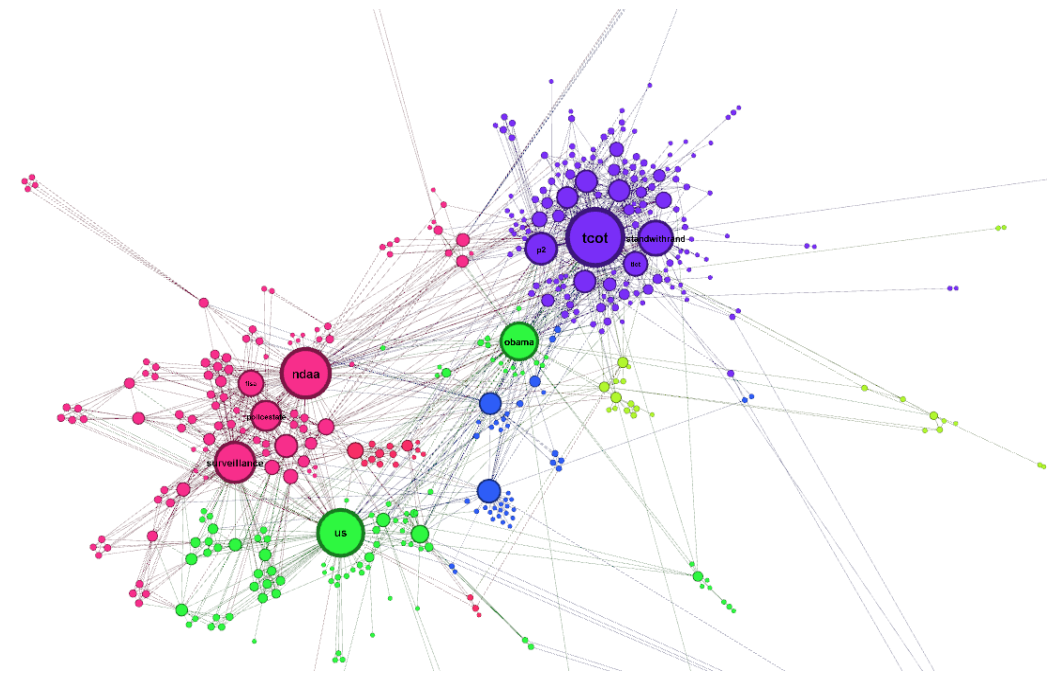
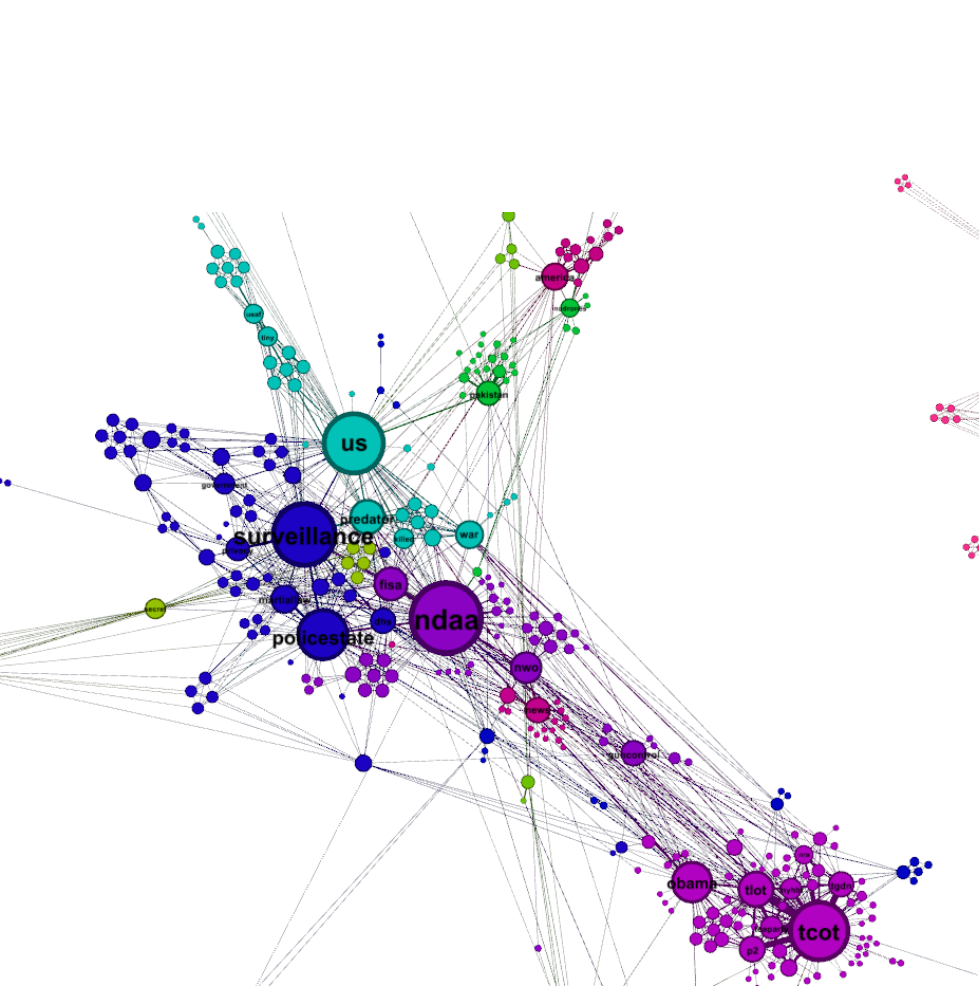
Courtesy of a 12 hour filibuster by Republican Senator Rand Paul.

Business Review, 2013-4-11: polls show a dramatic turn in public opinion on drones.

From our own analysis we have been unable to prove this ourselves in the Twitter drone space.



# Before and after the filibuster



# Conclusions



We have been able to witness a temporality in the twitter platform that otherwise would have remained invisible.

Drones continuously being remade and repurposed in the Twitter space.

Differing types of refraction. From platform-based events to material practices.

Refraction is a dynamic process instigated along the twitter timeline.

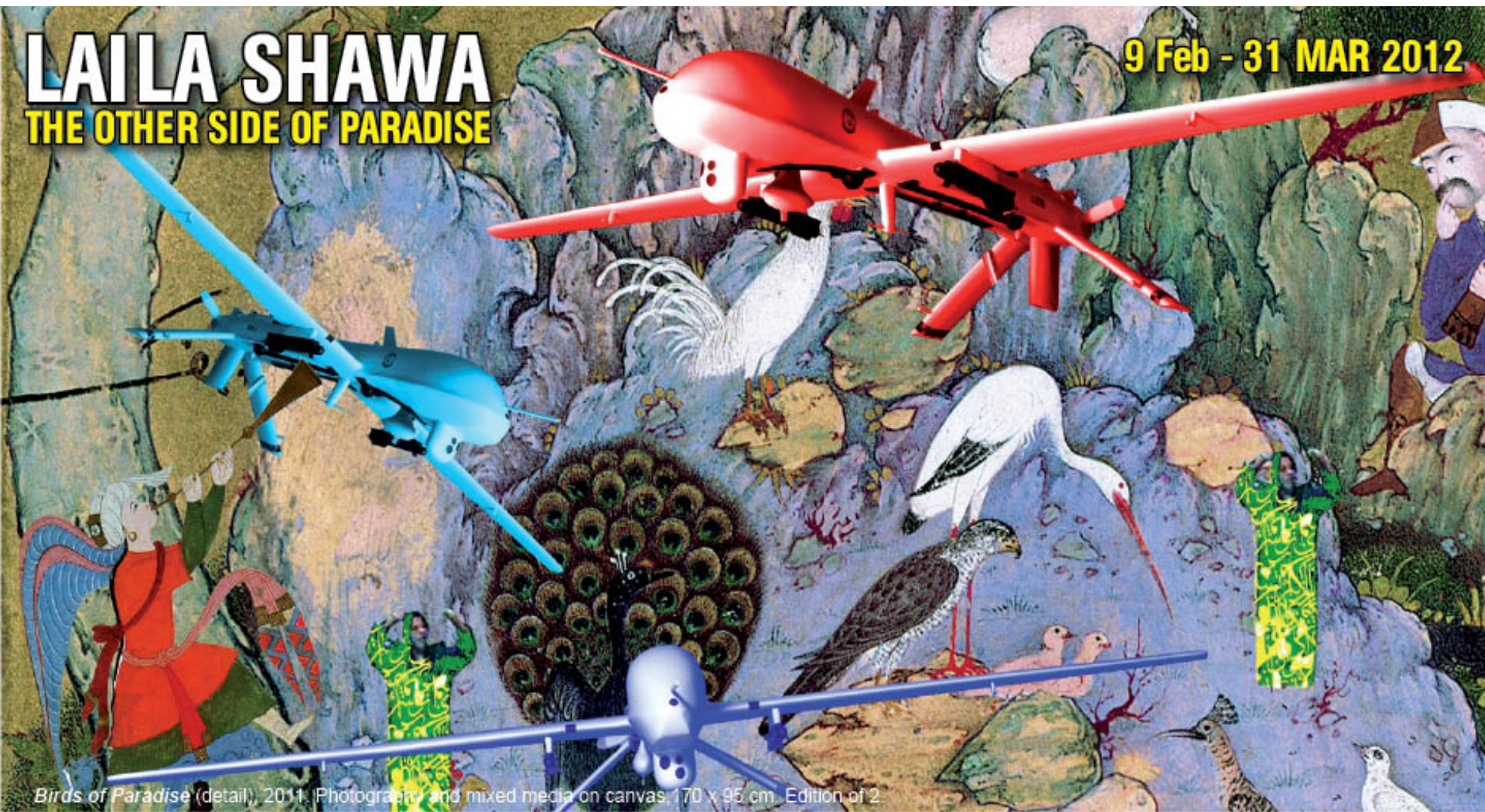
Thank you for listening!

We would like to thank Wifak, Michael and Richard for helping us along the way. #DroneBreakMyHeart

# LAILA SHAWA

## THE OTHER SIDE OF PARADISE

9 Feb - 31 MAR 2012



*Birds of Paradise* (detail), 2011. Photography and mixed media on canvas, 170 x 95 cm. Edition of 2.