
Miscellaneous

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Article 13 on social media and news media: disintermediation and reintermediation on the modern media landscape

Abstract

The former Article 13 (now Article 17) of the European directive on copyright and the internet (Directive EC2019/790) has been under negotiations since 2016 and was finally approved in 2019. In Portugal, however, the issue was mostly absent from public scrutiny and debate until November 2018. In that month, the issue arose to a prominent level, both in news media and in social media, following a wave of alerts issued by various young youtubers, incentivized by YouTube management. In this paper, we engage in the discussion concerning disintermediation, studying the way in which such alerts spread both in news media and social media, and understanding the role played by the users of social media platforms in modelling the social relevance and the social discourse of the issue of copyright and the internet. To do so, we used digital methods, collecting and analysing data from Twitter, YouTube and from online news media, mapping Article 13 discussions and identifying key actors in each field, as well as the connections between them. The results show that the ease of access provided by platforms such as Twitter or YouTube converts some users to prominent influencers and that, in some cases, those influencers are able to shift and model the public discourse about relevant collective issues.

Keywords

Networked Platforms, Twitter, YouTube, Article 13, disintermediation, news media.

1. Introduction

The European directive on copyright (Directive EC 2019/790) was under negotiation and development in European institutions since 2016. Nonetheless, in Portugal, the directive and its potential effects had been mostly absent from public debate and scrutiny until November 2018, when the issue suddenly raised to the forefront of media coverage and social media debate, following a series of YouTube videos and Twitter postings by users. These postings were coordinated in response to a plea by Google, to help fight the proposed legislation, which established that online platforms would be liable for certifying that files uploaded by users respected the copyright of original authors.

As a result of the plea made by Google, the issue exploded on social media from November 27th, 2018 onwards, and rose to the agenda of the news media in the following days

and weeks. Eventually, the proposed directive was approved and is currently being implemented in national legislations across Europe (EU, 2019).

From this chronology, we can see that the issue of Article 13 puts into perspective the relative roles of the news media and social media in the processes of agenda-setting and dissemination of information. Examining this from the perspective of portuguese Twitter and youtubers, as well as from portuguese online news media coverage, is the object of this paper. In it, we aim to identify the main information flows of the issue and the main actors in social media, and to analyse the corresponding coverage in news media. Our object of study is the intermediaries in this process, both in the field of the news media and social media. Our research question is defined as: if and to what extent are digital actors capable of shifting and modelling public attention about Article 13 on the Portuguese media landscape? We propose to identify key influencers on Twitter and YouTube on the issue of Article 13 and to understand the mainstream media's reaction to the coverage of the issue on social media.

In this process there were other variables that may have influenced the coverage of the issue by the news media, such as its editorial line, the timing and the process of the negotiation itself or the positions taken by several personalities and institutions in favour of the directive (e.g., letters addressed by Sir Paul McCartney¹ and the Music Industry representatives² to the European Union). However, the focus of this article is to assess if actions put in place by platforms and actors on social media had any effect on the coverage of the issue by the news media. We chose to focus on the coverage flow from the social media to the news media.

We analysed how the issue was addressed on Twitter and YouTube, then we looked at the news media coverage, and finally we compared approaches, identifying key moments and key players in each field.

To do that, we engaged in a digital methods approach (Rogers, 2019). First, we extracted data from Twitter corresponding to an established search query. Second, based on Twitter results, we collected data from YouTube, identified the most influential videos and analysed the main topics covered in it. Third, we extracted all the news published about the issue in the portuguese online media. Finally, we compared the results from the three sets of data.

We concluded that the social visibility of Article 13 in Portugal was, to a large extent, the result of a coordinated effort by non-institutional players in the digital media landscape – users from Twitter and YouTube– and that such effort managed to influence, to a large extent, the Article 13 discussion and propelled the issue to the forefront of social visibility. In our view, this case exemplifies a new type of agenda-setting process and sheds light on some very complex relations between the field of news media and the field of social media, integrating both the users and the online platforms they use. It also entails the logic of disintermediation of the traditional news mediators by a new kind of actor –digital intermediaries– that follow a different set of rules of action and engagement.

2. Theoretical framework

The issue of Article 13 is an example of a long power struggle between online social media platforms and representatives of copyright holders. The process of reforming copyright law in Europe began in December 2015 (EU, 2019:92) and was the subject of several interim meetings and negotiations from 2016 onwards. In late 2018, Google started using YouTube to alert users and creators on the platform for the alleged unintended consequences of the

¹ <https://www.billboard.com/articles/business/8463994/paul-mccartney-calls-on-european-parliament-to-tackle-value-gap-ahead-of>.

² <https://www.musicbusinessworldwide.com/over-200-creative-sector-associations-call-on-european-parliament-to-adopt-copyright-directive/>.

legislation³. Finally, on the 21st of November 2018, YouTube issued an email to creators on the platform urging them to take a stand against Article 13.

Following that email, several youtubers responded to the appeal by making and publishing videos about Article 13 and disseminating them online throughout their networks, namely Twitter. That is what gave way to Article 13 becoming an issue worth mapping, to understand the communicative and informative flows that are at stake in such a case. Mobilization against Article 13 was rampant on social media during the following days, including online petitions for its demise, subscribed to by thousands⁴, along with demonstrations both in Europe⁵ and in Portugal⁶.

This context is important to clarify how the case of Article 13 evokes knowledge about how the new media landscape incorporates the intermediation of online social media platforms into the traditional process of distribution of information by the news media.

Literature about the role of news media in the distribution of information is well established. The “agenda-setting” function of media theory argues that the importance given to certain topics in the media will lead to a likelihood that they will become known by the wider public, and is based on the idea that the media point the attention of the audiences to a set of issues about which they should have an opinion (McCombs, 2006; McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

The “gatekeeping” theory, on the other hand, was originally developed to show how the media monopolizes the process of presenting news to the public, and points to the criteria and methods for deliberating on what would or would not constitute news (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Other theories, namely “framing” and “priming,” enriched our understanding of how the news content was interpreted and received by audiences. “Framing” can be defined as the process of selecting and highlighting some facets of reality and making connections between them in order to promote a particular interpretation (Entman, 2004; Weaver, 2007). “Priming” refers to the process by which the knowledge acquired about a certain issue influences future opinions formulated or expressed about that issue (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

The emergence of what has come to be called “the network society” (Castells, 2010; Dijk, 2006) gave rise to new types of mediators in the process, calling into question the traditional “two-step flow of communication” (Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1948), and paving the way for the model of “networked flows of communication” (Cardoso, 2008). In these, traditional opinion leaders and agenda-setters cease to have the same degree of control over the process, and some of that control is dispersed through new actors in the network (Cardoso, 2006; Delwiche, 2005). The ease of access to social media not only converts such media into an important source of news (Shearer *et al.*, 2015) but also an instrument for the user to convert himself into a producer and distributor of content. This entails a change in the correlation of editorial power between the media and the audiences, because users now have the opportunity to choose which news content they wish to consume and can share the content they access with their network. And, in some cases, that network may provide significant audience numbers (Chakraborty *et al.*, 2019). In this context of fragmentation, it is legitimate to expect the agenda-setting effects to be less prominent, considering that users have access to news in different formats and through various sources (McCombs, Shaw & Weaver, 2014). This is particularly noteworthy among the younger generations, which spend more time on social media, receive most of their news through incidental exposure (Bergström & Belfrage, 2018) and increasingly rely on the role of the new opinion leaders on those platforms to construct their media experiences (Turcotte *et al.*, 2015).

³ www.youtube.com/saveyourinternet/.

⁴ <https://www.change.org/p/european-parliament-stop-the-censorship-machinery-save-the-internet>.

⁵ <https://www.wired.co.uk/article/article-13-protests>.

⁶ <https://www.jn.pt/nacional/cerca-de-20-pessoas-em-manifestacao-contra-o-artigo-13-em-lisboa-10314479.html>.

These new actors, whether authors of weblogs (Chaffee & Metzger, 2001) or, most recently, influencers on social media, tend to exert influence on their followers by trying to model their behaviour or political opinions (Weeks, Ardèvol-Abreu, & Zúñiga, 2017). That entails also a transfer of power (Castells, 2009), in the sense that the control of the information flow sets the agenda and disseminates a given perspective on an issue, particularly when there are different views on that issue. This is a shift in power both to the social media platforms (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Dijck, Poell & Waal, 2018) that host new communication channels, as well as to the users themselves (Dijck, 2009). This means that both of them –platforms and platform users– increase their editorial power with regard to the traditional media, albeit to different degrees and in complex dynamic relations between the two and also with the news media. In this case, YouTube mobilized its distribution power along with its influence over content creators to leverage its positions on the issue, in an evident display of platform power (Dijck *et al.*, 2018).

These relations between news media and social media are, most of the time, symbiotic (Downing & Droon, 2019), with social media users liking, commenting and sharing on the news raw material provided by traditional news media. In the issue of Article 13, however, the opposite occurred, which converts this case into a good observation point for assessing the relative influence of each field. The two fields –news media and social media– coexist in a complex media landscape and feed on each other through the relative agency of their users. In this case, users were to a large extent mobilized by the platform (YouTube) to oppose the news media on its behalf, which resulted in a curious display of power by the platform, the users and the news media.

Furthermore, the meshing of networks over an issue such as Article 13, involving news media, Twitter and YouTube, could also shed light on how viral information spreads (Centola, 2018) inside a network and between different networks, and how sometimes that information can be converted into political engagement or participation (Halpern, Valenzuela & Katz, 2017; Rainie *et al.*, 2012). In the case of Article 13, that did happen in several countries, with street demonstrations following the social media upheaval.

Analysis of the Article 13 issue also brings into debate the degree of real or supposed influence (Freberg *et al.*, 2011) that these “key mediators” acting on social media platforms may have on social and political issues (Dubois & Gaffney, 2014).

Given the degree of intersection between the fields of news media and social media, and within that, between different social media platforms such as Twitter and YouTube, the best approach to study those information flows may be what has come to be called “issue mapping” (Marres, 2015) –an evolution of the method of controversy analysis (Matamoros-Fernández, 2017).

Of course, the emergence of these new actors on the media landscape may also suggest a process of disintermediation of the former pivotal mediators, namely, the news media. The related concepts of “disintermediation” and “reintermediation” have also been conceptualized for the media and its functions by Eliah Katz (1988; 2003). Those concepts refer to moments in history when a new actor enters a media system –most often due to a technology change– and disintermediates another actor. This is partially what happened with the adoption of the internet and social media for the distribution of news. This entails a transformative process of intermediation, disintermediation and reintermediation (Chircu & Kaufman, 1999) that affects the power play of politics within the media system (Jungheer, Rivero & Gayo-Avello, 2020) and results in what has been called a “hybrid” media system, in which different players adopt different roles (Chadwick, 2017), and in which both the platforms and their users exert influence (Dijck *et al.*, 2018). The effective relevance of these different roles is precisely what we are trying to grasp in this paper.

3. Methodological approach to mapping Article 13 in social media and news media

According to our research objectives, a set of procedures was developed in a digital methods scope (Omena, 2019; Rogers, 2019) in order to understand the development of dynamics among social media platforms. This approach took place in three different phases.

3.1. Data collection on Twitter

The first stage of our methodology involved determining what query to use in mining data from Twitter. To do that, we used Google search tools to determine what words and what hashtags were most associated with the issue of Article 13. We came up with a list of relevant terms that were combined to compose the following data mining query:

#artigo13 OR #artigo13nao OR #saveyourinternet OR #Article13 OR #artigo17 OR #savetheinternet OR "artigo 13" OR "artigo 13 não" OR "saveyourinternet" OR "Article 13" OR "artigo 17" OR "savetheinternet"

To extract data from Twitter we used Forsight Brandwatch, which is an evolution of a data mining tool originally called Crimson Hexagon Forsight (Hopkins & King, 2010). This tool operates on the public API provided by Twitter for developers, respecting the privacy policies put in place by the platforms. It collects all the tweets, retweets and replies/mentions that include any of the terms in the search query, for a given time frame. Once all the tweets are collected, the tool is able to operate a series of different operations on the data, namely ranking the most active and the most influential actors, based on the number of tweets published and on the number of tweets published and retweeted.

For data collection concerning Article 13, we chose, first, a long-time frame: between October 1st, 2018 and April 30th, 2019: a total of seven months. This longer period was chosen to identify stable patterns of references to Article 13, both before and after the spikes identified for news media and social media coverage. For this period, we collected a total of 292,299 tweets, retweets and replies/mentions. Next, to obtain a fine-grained view, we focused our attention on the period the issue peaked, both in news media and in social media: between November 25th and December 24th, 2018. In that shorter period, the collected data showed a total of 232,467 tweets, retweets and replies/mentions.

3.2. Data collection on YouTube

To collect YouTube data, we filtered the tweets already collected from Twitter using Forsight Brandwatch for the ones containing the domain YouTube, extracted the video IDs and input them into YouTube Data Tools (Rieder, 2015) "video network" module. YouTube Data Tools software is a free tool relying on the YouTube API that allows researchers to retrieve different sorts of data. Specifically, the "video network" module retrieves the "related videos" from the "search list" API endpoint.

This procedure allowed us to obtain a network of relations between the videos, according to YouTube recommendation logic. The output file (GDF) was imported to Gephi in order to visualize the network, identifying communities that were formed along similar themes, and videos that stood out as the most influential. In a second step, an exploratory thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2016) of the 20 most influential videos was conducted, permitting us to identify the main themes of the discussion.

3.3. Data collection on online news media

To analyse the general editorial coverage of the same issue, we performed a collection of data for news published online about Article 13 during the time frame under analysis, also using Forsight Brandwatch. This tool collects all the news media published online during a given time period that use –anywhere in the title, text and subtitles– any of the words included in a given search query. To set the query used we followed a similar methodology: as a first stage, we used Google search tools to perceive what were the most-used terms by the media outlets

to refer to this issue. Based on that search, we came to this composed query, devised to isolate references to “Article 13” only when in the context of copyright:

(“artigo 13” AND (copyright OR “direito de autor” OR “direitos de autor”)) OR (“artigo 13.º” AND (copyright OR “direito de autor” OR “direitos de autor”)) OR (“artigo 13.º” AND (copyright OR “direito de autor” OR “direitos de autor”))

3.4. Ethical considerations

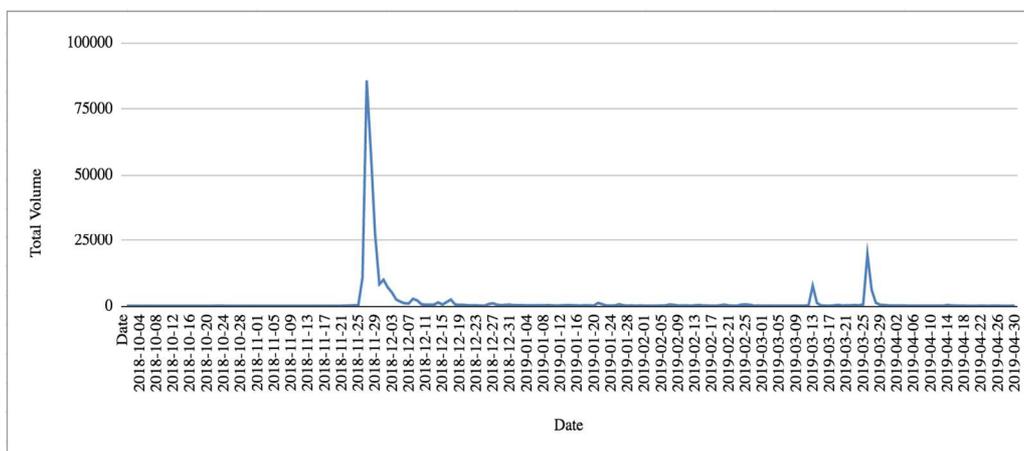
In data collection procedures and the presentation of results, ethical considerations have been taken. The platforms where the data was originally posted have privacy policies and settings that users can determine. The tools used only collect public data, so the corpus under analysis is composed only of public data. The theme under analysis was considered non-critical or sensitive, not justifying anonymization procedures. Additionally, the key actors in this analysis have large audiences and encourage interaction with their publications; therefore, we considered them to have low expectations regarding their publication’s privacy.

4. Results

4.1. Article 13 on Twitter

For the analysis of the results, we looked at a longer period (between October 1st, 2018 and April 30th, 2019) and a shorter, more intense period (between November 25th and December 24th, 2018). As shown in Figure 1, the issue was mostly absent from Twitter previous to November 25th but tweets and retweets about it peaked two days later, on November 27th, and stayed relatively high for 30 days after that, corresponding to the aforementioned shorter, more intense period.

Figure 1: Total number of tweets, retweets and replies per day, containing references to Article 13, in Portuguese, between October 1st, 2018 and April 30th, 2019.



Source: Twitter. Data extracted via Forsigh Brandwatch.

Mentions to the issue of Article 13 were notably more frequent after this shorter period than before. Between October 1st and November 24th, 2018, tweets, retweets and replies mentioning Article 13 numbered on average 23 per day, while after that period, that is, from December 25th, 2018 to April 30th, 2019, that average had risen to 458 tweets, retweets or replies per day.

During the shorter period, a total of 232,467 tweets were published, retweeted or responded, corresponding to an average of 7,748 tweets, retweets and replies per day. That corresponds to 79.89% of the total 292,299 collected. Focusing our attention on that shorter and most intense period of activity we were able to see in detail the influence of certain key mediators on the propagation of information. Considering the reach of their own tweets,

along with retweets and replies, @wuantt, @felipeneto and @youtube were the most influential user accounts, with 8.2%, 5.3% and 3.9%, respectively, of the total 232,467 tweets, retweets and replies published. If we consider only original tweets (n=33,224), the @youtube account either published or was mentioned in 22.9% of the total, which means many Twitter users referred to a considerable array of YouTube videos during this period, using the referral @youtube in those tweets. Considering only tweets by or referring to @wuantt or @felipeneto, they represent 0.9% and 0.6% of the total 33,224 original tweets. This means their reach was mostly based on the retweeting of their tweets or mentions, which attests to their influence on the dissemination of the issue.

In the ranking of the 20 accounts with most influence on this issue on Twitter, there were at least six youtubers (the already mentioned Wuant and Felipe Neto, as well as Gonçalo Leite, João Sousa, Leandro Rodrigues and RicardooTV), alongside others.

The two first influencers of this issue on Twitter –@wuantt and @felipeneto– are prominent youtubers in the Portuguese and Brazilian YouTube scene, both with a large audience in Portugal. Between November 26th and December 1st, at the peak of the issue, @wuantt tweeted 52 times about Article 13, amassing a total of 42,502 interactions and 39,435 retweets on those tweets. Felipe Neto tweeted only 9 times about Article 13, all on November 27th, which resulted in 9,075 interactions and 8,468 retweets. In both cases, influence seemed to have been a function of both their reach on the social network and the frequency of their posting. The first post by @wuantt came as a direct reaction to the above-mentioned email by YouTube to its creators, but most of the following came as a reaction to the buzz the issue generated on social media and on the news media. A significant part of the posts came as a response to the coverage made by the news media subsequent to the virality of the issue.

From this we can register that @wuantt seems to have influenced the issue of Article 13 mostly on Twitter, whereas @felipeneto's influence was manifested more prominently on YouTube, as shown below. The account @youtube tweeted only a few times about the issue but was abundantly mentioned by users, directing attention on Twitter towards YouTube videos about the issue. When looking only at the most mentioned accounts during this period, the order is: @youtube, @wuantt, @felipeneto, @sicnoticias and @windoh. The first three we have already examined; @windoh is yet another popular Portuguese youtuber, and @sicnoticias is the Twitter handle of a major Portuguese TV network, which extensively covered the issue and, at one or two moments, aroused lively reactions from Twitter users, hence the numerous mentions.

As for the hashtags that were most used during the shorter period, #saveyourinternet clearly stood out with more than 30 thousand tweets, retweets or replies using it during this period. Of note, #saveyourinternet was the hashtag used to promote the online petition protesting Article 13 and was abundantly used on the tweets published by YouTube about this issue.

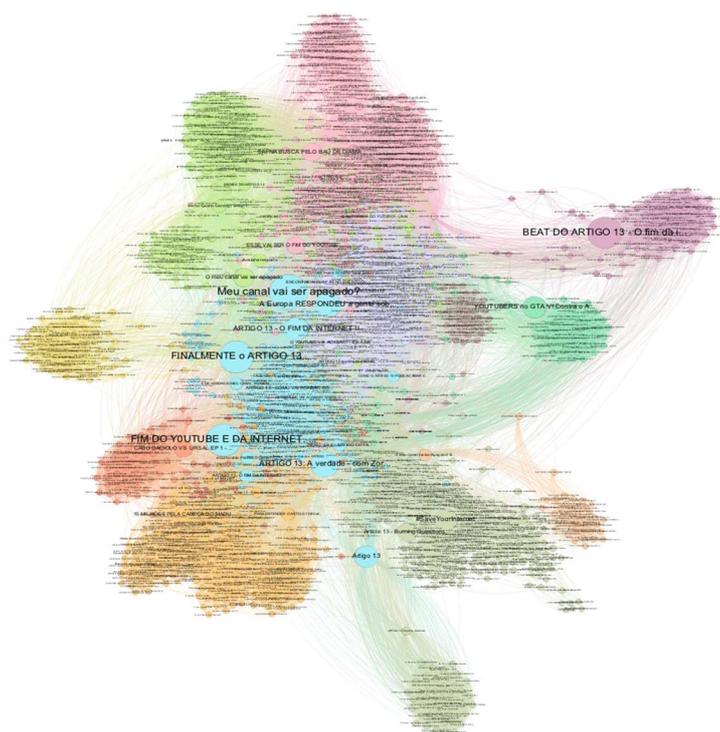
The tone of the 232,467 tweets, retweets and replies was mainly critical of Article 13, of the media and music business and of the European politicians and institutions. When considering the URL sources that were used inside these 232,467 tweets, retweets and replies, a substantial part of them (47 out of the 100 most shared tweets) referred to YouTube videos, as mentioned above. This points to a strict relationship between two different platforms: Twitter and YouTube. The buzz on Twitter during the most intense days of this issue was highly connected to YouTube, both because of the key influencers –among which were several known youtubers– and because of the referenced links, which were frequently YouTube videos about Article 13.

4.2. Article 13 on YouTube

Data from Forsight Brandwatch showed that youtube.com was the second most referenced host of tweets related to Article 13. The output file from YouTube Data Tools (Rieder, 2015)

“video network” module (GDF), representing the network of related inputted video IDs, was visualized using Gephi. The generated graph was composed of 1,819 videos (represented by nodes) and 41,427 connections between them based on YouTube recommendation logic (represented by edges). In order to identify communities based on thematic similarities surrounding Article 13, we applied an algorithm modularity to the graph. In total, 12 clusters emerged that are represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Article 13 communities on YouTube based on the shared URL on Twitter. Directed graph with 1,819 nodes and 41,427 edges. Node colour defines communities/clusters and size encodes betweenness centrality score.



Source: YouTube. Data extracted via YouTube Data Tools.

The blue cluster, the centre of the network, represents 165 videos of which 120 were specific to Article 13. The videos in this cluster explained what Article 13 was, what supposedly was going to change, the implications of Article 13 approval, critiques concerning the European Union directive, and suggestions that the directive favoured media outlets and record labels.

By taking a deeper look at the remaining 11 clusters, it was possible to perceive that the specific videos on Article 13 were residual (i.e., of the remaining 1,699 only 22 approached the Article 13 issue). A deeper analysis allowed us to conclude that such clusters were formed according to the category of videos and, consequently, the category of channels with videos on Article 13 being adapted to it. Such data provided insights into the roles of specific channels and their contributions, not only in discussing Article 13, but also in how they constituted an important role in networking functions, acting as a bridge connecting communities on a specific subject.

Contrary to what happens with the analysis of controversial topics that can polarize opinions (Burgess & Matamoros-Fernández, 2016; Downing & Droon, 2019) and where it is possible to identify such opinions among different clusters, in the case of Article 13 the content producers on YouTube seemed to agree. Article 13 did not originate different opinions but was discussed among different categories of content such as comedy, entertainment, gaming or

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music with a more or less political vein, more or less depth, portraying the diversity of YouTube content. Videos had a common point of view: if the directive was to be approved, the Internet as followers knew it was going to end and channels were going to be deleted, thus users stood alongside YouTube in a joint venture against the proposed legislation.

This position reflected the email that YouTube issued to its creators: the main objective was to generate awareness on the topic, mobilizing empathy among youtubers and their audiences, since it would affect them, in an attempt to halt approval of the directive.

In order to identify key influential videos within the Article 13 network we applied the betweenness centrality score to the graph. Betweenness centrality is an index that quantifies how much a node controls the information flow between all pairs of nodes in a graph (Kourtellis *et al.*, 2013). A high betweenness count indicates that the node holds authority over others in the network (Disney, 2020).

Such a metric also permits the identification of nodes that acted as bridges between different clusters (Burgess & Matamoros-Fernández, 2016) and their capability to disseminate messages between other communities (Grandjean, 2016). Removing such videos from the network would interrupt communications between other nodes. In Figure 2, the nodes that are bigger represent the videos with a higher degree of betweenness centrality score within the complete network.

The identification of the most influential videos, and consequent exploratory qualitative analysis of the 20 most influential ones within the complete network (see Table 1), was particularly important in our study. By analyzing the position of the authors through their discourse regarding Article 13, we were able to understand the reach of those narratives. This step was deemed necessary in view of the object of this paper: the disintermediation role of Twitter and YouTube authors.

Table 1: Twenty most influential videos ranked by betweenness centrality score.

Channel Title	Video Label	Betweenness Centrality Score	Published Data	ViewCount
Felipe Neto	Meu canal vai ser apagado?	331683.6171846778	28-11-2018	4 460 871
Diego Rox Oficial	FIM DO YOUTUBE E DA INTERNET. ARTIGO 13	298442.4585149381	02-12-2018	377 651
Nuno Agonia	FINALMENTE o ARTIGO 13	295385.6294820835	28-11-2018	277 115
Canal Sr. Nescau	BEAT DO ARTIGO 13 - O fim da internet - Vou pegar minha marreta (FUNK REMIX) by Canal Sr. Nescau	294360.03891718446	06-12-2018	1 695 645
Rúben Branco	ARTIGO 13: A verdade - com Zorlak (Streamer)	227264.69701402294	06-12-2018	40 484
Felipe Neto	A Europa RESPONDEU a gente sobre o ARTIGO 13 (inacreditável)	213773.38422048767	01-12-2018	3 764 766
Você Sabia?	ARTIGO 13 - O FIM DA INTERNET !!	198133.5023711513	01-12-2018	3 413 727
Bumba na Fofinha	Artigo 13	182476.82899986336	30-11-2018	269 436
YouTube	#SaveYourInternet	181420.78307333332	19-11-2018	-
Guimar	YOUTUBERS no GTA V! Contra o ARTIGO 13 - Getea Sander	181102.88373213835	08-12-2018	85 000
YouTube Creators	Article 13 - Burning Questions #SaveYourInternet	146377.3205038931	16-11-2018	1 732 073
wuant	O meu canal vai ser apagado	144044.64245516981	26-11-2018	1 907 371
Felipe Neto	SAÍ NA BUSCA PELO BAÚ DE DIAMANTES NO MINECRAFT #4	141544.61181764485	27-03-2020	420 752
André Guedes	CABO DACIOLO VS URSAL EP 1 - ARTIGO 13 E O FIM DA INTERNET!	135908.42981690282	14-12-2018	1 193 622
Gato Galactico	ESSE VAI SER O FIM DO YOUTUBE !!!	127070.43806893162	28-11-2018	571 226
Diego Rox Oficial	15 MILHÕES PELA CABEÇA DO MADURO E MAIS NOTÍCIAS BOOOAS!!!	123061.19050005681	27-03-2020	24 528
Peter Aqui	ARTIGO 13 - COMO VAI ACABAR COM O YOUTUBE	105756.95133570222	03-12-2018	278 856
Cadê a chave?	O YOUTUBE VAI ACABAR? - Ep. 1295	95020.8025407513	30-11-2018	601 019
wuant	A minha resposta	92678.66890415356	30-11-2018	869 473
LiloVLOG	ARTIGO 13 - O FIM DA INTERNET	92507.05744537135	29-11-2018	71 645

Source: YouTube. Data extracted via YouTube Data Tools.

Upon initial examination of these top 20 videos, it was possible to verify that key mediator's videos were from YouTube user channels with very different levels of audiences, potential reach or category. This points to a common interest on the subject, independent of the

channel's metrics or category, and a reason for youtubers and their communities to stick together, as we described above.

Among the key influential videos, there were two published by YouTube itself (“#SaveYourInternet” and “Article 13 – Burning Questions #SaveYourInternet”), both explaining why, according to YouTube, the approval of Article 13 would severely affect the use of YouTube and the internet as a whole. Also, note that the hashtag used, one of the most pre-eminent in the Twitter analysis, indexed a call for action, and was highly emotional.

These two YouTube videos were the oldest among those in the ranking (from November 11th and November 16th respectively) allowing us to conclude that the remaining videos reacted to these. Such a flow helps us strengthen the thesis that the platform, in a first moment, and its users, in a second moment, have the capability to influence agenda-setting, considering that until that moment the attention given by the news media had been residual, and, further, this flow puts into evidence the disintermediation process. Note that there were not any videos from the news media on the ranking. Eighteen of the videos on the ranking were in the peak period, previously identified. The remaining two that were not, and whose content was also not specific to Article 13, reinforce the logic of the relationship between videos on the network that, by being linked together, act as conductors of the information flow.

As part of the dynamic flow of information in the digital environment, we encountered two situations among the key influential videos. One, where part of the key video presented a counterflow, trying to rouse audience discussion on Article 13 and get it on the agenda of the news media, and a second one where the coverage given by the news media to the subject was part of the videos. An example is the video, “*O meu canal vai ser apagado*” [“My channel will be deleted”], published on YouTube by “Wuant” on November 26th, 2018, which ranked in the 12th position and harnessed more than 1.9 million views. This video was also shared on Twitter and gained attention from the news media. As a matter of fact, it was after the publication of this particular video that coverage by the news media picked up momentum.

The kind of news coverage and treatment given by the news media to such video and to its author, specifically by SIC Notícias, already identified as a key actor on Twitter, was criticized in some of the other 20 most influential videos, and was considered purposely negative. Youtubers argued that the lack of coverage or the negative coverage by the news media was due to a self-interest on the benefits the news industry would retain upon the approval of Article 13. In general terms, the narrative of the key influential videos seemed to follow and amplify the main ideas expressed in the two videos published by YouTube, standing up for the platform and rebutting Article 13. An explanation and contextualization of Article 13 was normally the starting point of the videos. Following this, the predicted consequences were discussed, focusing on the fact that videos would be deleted and that, in the future, what users could publish would be subject to a strict set of rules. They gave examples of how their mostly visual content would be affected and how they would not be able to publish new content in the same way. Authors presented consequences also for consumers, extending to other platforms, like social media or search engines, arguing that Article 13's consequences would affect all internet users, jeopardizing their freedom of expression due to the restrictions.

The European Union and legislators were also both targeted in the videos. First, the videos questioned the fact that the laws were being made by those who were not democratically elected. And, second, do not recognize the European legislative authorities with the necessary knowledge about the technical functioning and the business models of the digital as a whole and of social media in particular. The video “*Artigo 13 – A Europa RESPONDEU a gente sobre o ARTIGO 13 (inacreditável)*” [Europe ANSWERED us about Article 13 (unbelievable)] by Felipe Neto, with more than 3.7 million of views, provides an example of such discourse, questioning and discrediting the response of the European Union to youtubers after they shared their concerns. Felipe Neto, identified as a key influential actor

on Twitter, contributed to the YouTube key influential ranking with three videos, two specifically on Article 13 occupying the 1st (more than 4.4 million views) and 6th (more than 3.7 million views) positions.

The solution was opposing Article 13. In some videos viewers were asked to sign an online petition to abolish the article, responding to YouTube's call to action as a way to #SaveYourInternet or suggest that viewers join protests that were already taking place.

Our exploratory qualitative analysis of the 20 most influential videos showed that, independent of the author, the main narrative of the videos was in line with YouTube's position and against the regulation –arguing that it was not clear how the regulation was going to be applied, but that it would change the internet experience.

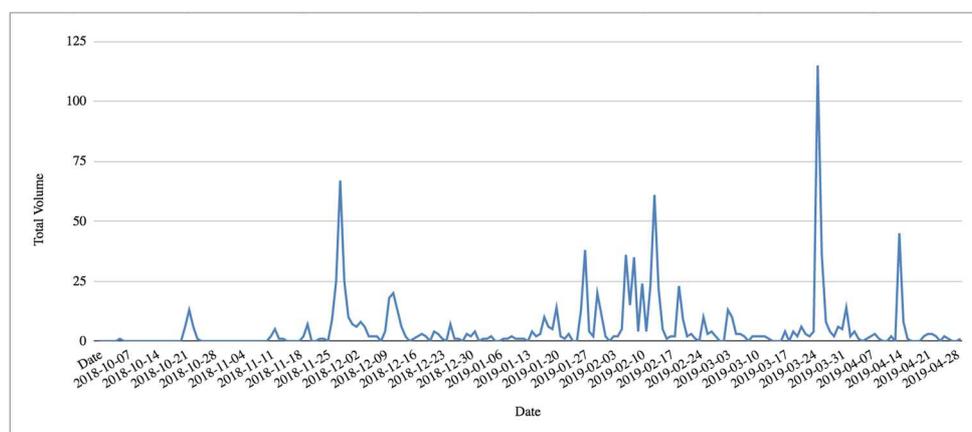
The result of applying the betweenness centrality algorithm to the Article 13 video network showed that metrics such as views and number of followers were not determinants to consider a video as influential. However, they were important in analyzing the potential reach of the videos and consequently the narratives embedded in them. Another interesting aspect was the identification of common media objects throughout different platforms, as happened, for instance, with the use of the hashtag. Via the video analysis, we understood that these uses were somehow conditioned by YouTube, who also used them in their official communications. Although we have identified common players to Twitter and YouTube, not only did their contributions occupy different scores in the rankings, but other players were introduced, indicating the existence of specific communities in each of the platforms analyzed.

4.3. Article 13 in the news media

To understand how the issue of Article 13 was treated in the news media and assess this for intersection points with the information that circulated on social media, we performed a similar analysis of all the news published online about this theme, again using the Forsight Brandwatch tool, which has a module for news.

In the longer period, between October 1st, 2018 and April 30th, 2019, the issue of Article 13 was the object of news in the online media 1,106 times. When looking at Figure 3, we can see that there are three main peaks: 1) on November 29th, 2018 (67 news pieces); 2) on February 14th, 2019 (61 news articles); 3) and on March 26th, 2019 (115 news publications). March 26th was the day the final version of the directive was approved. The first observation to make is that the first peak of online news about Article 13 occurred two days after the issue peaked on social media.

Figure 3: Total number of news references to Article 13, per day, in Portugal, between October 1st, 2018 and April 30th, 2019.



Source: Forsight Brandwatch.

During the shorter and intense period that the issue trended on social media –between November 25th and December 24th– it also trended on news media, with 249 news articles published about Article 13, an average of 8 news articles per day.

However, before that period, between October 1st and November 24th, only 49 news articles were published about the issue –less than one article per day (6 per week). However, after that, from December 25th, 2018 to April 30th, 2019, a total of 808 news articles were published online about Article 13, averaging 6 articles per day (42 per week). The meaning of this is that, to a great extent, the issue of Article 13 seems to have been put on the agenda of the news media following the dissemination performed by YouTube and Twitter users after the appeal made by Google. It barely existed in the public agenda of the news media prior to that and never left the agenda afterwards.

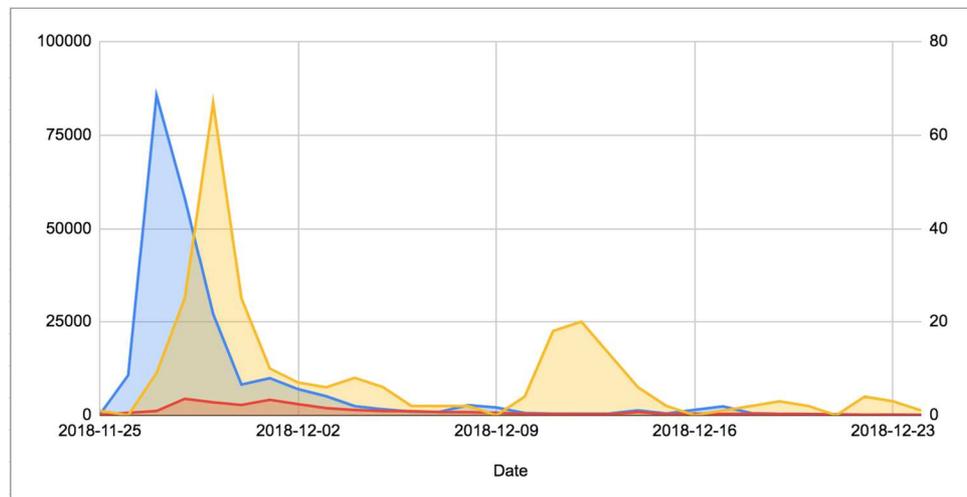
During the 30-day period between November 25th and December 24th, most of the online news publications about Article 13 were related to the buzz that was going on about the issue on social media. Most of those articles were connected to what was happening on social media, referring to youtubers that were talking about it (mostly Wuant), and deconstructing the idea that Article 13 would mean the end of YouTube and of the internet. Not only did the news media refer intensively to the youtubers that were fuelling this movement, but also these youtubers referred back to the treatment they were given in mainstream media, in a curious recurring flow that fuelled both camps. Wuant, in particular, made several videos commenting on and downplaying the coverage he was given by several websites during this period⁷. Those news media articles were, of course, also shared and commented on Twitter, thus increasing their exposure and reach in a kind of symbiotic relationship between the two fields: news media and social media.

5. Discussion

The first relevant observation regarding the data collected is the different time frame of the issue in each field. As we can see in Figure 4, when we juxtapose the number of media objects produced per day on Twitter, YouTube and the news media, we see that the issue first surged on Twitter, then passed to YouTube and, only later, arrived at the news media. In truth, the spreading of the issue between the three fields happened extremely fast but can be traced back to various Tweets that seem to have put the issue on the ‘agenda’ (notably the ones published by @wuantt on November 27th and 28th). YouTube generated more media objects on the 28th and 29th, and news about Article 13 peaked, in this 30-day period, on November 29th as a reaction to what was trending on social media.

⁷ Here is an example: <https://youtu.be/7wenlGatBsE>.

Figure 4: Figure combining the total number of tweets, retweets and replies (blue), YouTube video descriptions and comments (red) and online news (yellow) containing references to Article 13, in Portuguese, between November 25th and December 24th, 2018. Twitter and YouTube are on one scale and news media are on another scale, for visualization purposes.



Source: Forsight Brandwatch.

We can also observe that the number of Twitter referrals to the issue was very prominent on those two days, but comparatively small on others (see Figure 1). That means Twitter displayed, on this issue, a ‘viral’ behaviour: the number of tweets published, shared and replied to on the most intense days of this issue was never similar throughout the rest of the period. Yet, that outburst at the end of November seems to have put the issue on the agenda of both YouTube users and news media editors (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Therefore, Twitter seems to have had, on this issue, a leading role when it comes to spreading the issue to other fields. On YouTube, the dissemination of the issue was more gradual, following those ‘viral’ days on Twitter.

When we look at the way the issue was spread on news media, we observe that it was not on the agenda before the surge of tweets and the YouTube buzz about it, but it became very prominent after that. Indeed, there were several peaks of editorial attention to the issue after that, similar or even greater than the one registered on November 29th. This means that the issue was set on the agenda of the news media after that date, and as a reaction to the particular buzz generated on Twitter and YouTube, during a few days, at the end of November.

The collected data also allowed for the identification of some key mediators (Katz, 1988) on the issue, both on Twitter and on YouTube. On Twitter, @wuantt and @felipeneto –along with @youtube– stood out as the most influential accounts on the issue of Article 13. Alongside these, we found a second level of Twitter users that either published on the issue or disseminated those three key mediators’ stance on the issue via retweets.

On YouTube, the top 20 key mediators videos identified ranged across different channel categories and had different audience sizes, and had actors in common with Twitter, like Felipe Neto and YouTube. In the same way that it happened on Twitter, other YouTube users seemed to have followed the key mediators’ narratives, and extended the tone of criticism against Article 13 to news media and to its wider audience.

In some cases, the key mediators were the same on the two platforms. But in other cases, they were specific to one platform, confirming one instance of the “hybridity” referred by Chadwick (2017). On YouTube, most of the key mediators’ videos were by prominent youtubers that were leveraged to do so by YouTube’s official communication. On Twitter, on

the other hand, key mediators were more dispersed and only in part corresponded to those identified on YouTube.

This means that, in disseminating an issue like Article 13, a set of complex relationships was established between Twitter and YouTube, with both platforms criticizing and combating the proposed implementation of Article 13. The vast majority of the videos, posts and shares were critical of Article 13, following the fact that they were in the first place triggered by an official position (and appeal) by YouTube. This is the second instance of “hybridity,” referred to by Chadwick (2017): platforms themselves exert power on political and social issues either by the architecture of their systems (Dijck *et al.*, 2018) or by the leverage they are capable of exerting on their users.

The news media reaction to the issue of Article 13 was also influenced by the buzz that was created on Twitter and YouTube by the aforementioned key mediators. We saw how news media coverage of the Article 13 issue was almost non-existent before the issue trended on Twitter and on YouTube, and how it became frequent on the agenda of the news media during that period and afterwards (see Figure 3). This puts in evidence the ability of a subject that is trending on social media to influence the agenda-setting and also demonstrates the effective disintermediation of news media in disseminating the issue to a larger audience. In this case, both the users and the platforms they used were influential in the way the issue spread on social media, as well as to the relevance it gained in the news media. Both the users and the platforms they use are part of the reintermediation process (Chircu & Kauffman, 1999) and are actors we should take into account if we want to understand the media system in the age of social media platforms.

Furthermore, whereas the coverage of the issue on Twitter and YouTube was mostly critical and prone to denouncing and combating Article 13, voicing fear that it would “end the internet” or jeopardize platforms like YouTube, the coverage on the news media mostly downplayed those fears and was critical of the social media mediators’ role in the process. In a way, we can understand this process as an attempt by YouTube and the YouTube and Twitter authors to ‘frame’ the issue on a given perspective, and a subsequent downplaying of that framing by the news media, which meant implicitly proposing an alternative framing of the issue (Entman, 2004; Weaver, 2007). This is very clear when we compare the coverage of the issue on social media and on news media, and it speaks to the different logics of operation of the two fields –news media and social media– that are the subject of our analysis.

Further, there is a manifest “priming” effect at work here (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). The way the above data connects the first YouTube videos and e-mail to the public expression of the authors leveraged for that use, and then, from those authors to the massive user reactions on Twitter, expresses a priming effect that is the result of opinions formed on the basis of the first set of information received on the subject and not necessarily corresponding to the actual content of the directive.

Additionally, several news pieces about the stance taken by key mediators on Twitter and YouTube were then repurposed by those key mediators to further feed the issue on social media. This illustrates, to some degree, the complexity –sometimes in symbiosis, sometimes in antagonism– that is established between the coverage of an issue by the news media and by the users of social media platforms. In this case, the controversy was not observed among communities formed on social media but between social media and news media, where both fields seem to have fed off each other, even if with different positions regarding the subject at stake.

Overall, the data collected in this research illustrates the way in which a certain issue may be put on the agenda by the action of some key mediators in two social media platforms, and how the reach of that mediation may drive traditional news media to include the issue on their editorial agenda, in spite of (or by virtue of) complex and conflated relationships between the two fields.

6. Final considerations and recommendations

The present analysis shows how the issue of Article 13 is a good observation point from which to assess the relative agenda-setting power of the news media and social media, as well as the power that can be exerted (in either manifest or covert ways) by the platforms themselves. At the same time, mapping the dissemination of the issue on both fields –the news media and social media– can shed light on the complex relations between them. We may conclude that not only is there a process of transferring influential power from traditional mediators to new types of mediators, but also that this occurs in complex, contested and not always symbiotic ways. The same is valid within the realm of social media platforms. We noticed how Twitter is prone to outbursts of coverage due to its virality and how that was translated into the visibility of the issue on YouTube, also showing the complex ways in which an issue may summon different social media platforms and how users can position themselves as prominent on one or both of them.

The role that Google, the owner of YouTube, exerted on this issue should be highlighted. Not only did the company exert its platform power –resulting from its ability to control the dissemination of information on its platform– but it also actively mobilized the users of that platform to act on its behalf, on the platform and elsewhere (on Twitter, for instance).

With this article on the specific news media and social media coverage of the issue of Article 13 in Portugal, we hope to have contributed to a better understanding of the changes above mentioned, which result from a process of disintermediation of the traditional mediators and processes of mediation (e.g., agenda-setting) and the emergence of new relevant agents of mediation, namely the platforms and, to a certain extent, their users.

Finally, we feel that the complex issues arising from the relations between the fields of social media and news media –as well as between different social media platforms– is still lacking in research. Therefore, we would recommend that controversial social issues should be studied from this perspective, combining different fields and the relations between them.

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