

E-petitions and mobilisation dynamics: The importance of local anchoring

An environmental case study in France and Belgium

Martine Legris

ORCID Nr: 0000-0002-7320-0594
Lille University, CNRS, CERAPS, martine.legris@univ-lille.fr

Régis Matuszewicz

Reims University, CERAPS
7 rue Voltaire, 59370 Mons en Baroeul, regis.matuszewicz@univ-reims.fr

Abstract: E-petitioning is a useful object of study for observing the potential emergence of a new relationship to politics and new forms of political participation. Access to a database, such as that found on the website, lapetition.be, allows us to focus on the reality of the signatories' behaviour rather than on their declarations. We explore the crucial role of local anchoring in the effectiveness of e-petitions as a tool for mobilisation within the context of environmental issues. Our research presents a comprehensive case study conducted in France and Belgium, analysing the dynamics and outcomes of e-petitions focused on environmental concerns. We examine the impact of local engagement, considering geographical, social, and cultural factors that influence the success and effectiveness of online mobilisation efforts.

Our results highlight the benefits of localised engagement in mobilising citizens and fostering collective action by examining specific case studies in France and Belgium. We also delve into the mechanisms and processes through which e-petitions can trigger mobilisation, ranging from social network effects to emotional resonance and issue salience. Last, we analyse how e-petitions can effectively serve as a catalyst for change in environmental policy and promote sustainable practices.

Keywords: e-democracy, e-petition, environmental movements, digital mobilisation

Acknowledgement: We thank our colleagues in the APPEL project for their kind cooperation in our global study, especially Thomas Leonard, for his support.

1. Introduction

E-petitioning is useful for observing the potential emergence of a new relationship to politics and new forms of political participation. A number of authors (Neveu, 2011; Barthélémy, 2000; Monnoyer-Smith, 2011) have suggested that we are facing a transformation of democracy. According to this view, petitions are, like demonstrations and boycotts, a form of political action arising from the people to issue a challenge to power (Tiberj, 2017). These authors consider that this particular movement is characterised by a greater capacity for initiative on the part of local groups, owing to a flexible, horizontal structure and more pragmatic and concrete demands. Others view such citizen participation more as a mark of mistrust (Rosanvallon, 2006) or as the expression of a digital democracy of 'counter-publics' that aims to challenge representative democracy with the help of digital tools, following the example of the alter-globalisation movement (Dahlberg, 2011).

Thanks to digital technology, it is increasingly common for people to participate in online communities by signing electronic petitions. E-petitions are increasingly recognised as another way citizens can make their voices heard and influence the political agenda. This is because they "allow citizens to engage with lawmakers and rally around issues they consider relevant" (Vromen et al., 2022). One such issue is climate change, raised by many communities worldwide concerned about the environment. This is one of the most popular issues in the global arena. That explains why we chose three petitions on environmental topics. At the same time, research has already been done on e-petitions (Halpin et al., 2018). Previous studies have shown that one issue has not been sufficiently explored; namely, how did one e-petition succeed? A second set of works appears to identify the factors that encourage community participation in successfully using this online petition platform. These studies are rare and apply to various contexts, leaving a gap in the literature (Setyoko, Wahyuningrat, & Denok., 2023).

As an embodiment of new social movements, the environmental movement became aware early on of the importance of internet tools for its mobilisations. Internet users in the environmental movement are characterised by possessing a certain number of resources (they are militant, well-informed, and can communicate in English). A study focused on petitions relating to environmental issues should, therefore, be well suited to providing greater insight into new practices of digital mobilisation.

This research aims to investigate electronically enabled forms of participation and their mobilisation dynamics in three environmental e-petitions. We focus on the local and global dynamics associated with online/offline forms of engagement and look at the actual behaviour of e-petitioners.

We then show how e-petitions may be seen as an entanglement of online-offline and global-local dynamics and explain which factors influence the level of success that a collective movement may achieve in the policy-making process.

Access to a database, such as that found on the website, lapetition.be, provides the opportunity to overcome a certain number of limitations associated with traditional methods of studying political participation since this allows us to focus on the reality of the signatories' behaviour rather than their declarations. We will follow the traces left by the petitioners on this site. In order to make our

study as intensive as possible, we focus on the three largest petitions in terms of the number of signatures (each including more than 4000 signatures) in the ‘environment’ category, taken from among the 1034 online petitions relating to the environment that are visible on the *lapétition.be* website (see Table 1). The ‘environment’ category constitutes 8% of the total number of petitions submitted to the site. It contains 7% of the signatures, which places it in the median position relative to the other categories listed on the site. A distinctive feature of the petitions in this category is that the associated comments are longer than the average, with a mean number of words above 50 (Barats et al., 2019). Aside from the success of petitions in terms of the number of signatures that they manage to collect, the phenomenon of ‘co-signing overspill’ highlights the fact that successful petitions lead to a renewed interest in petitions in general, according to Puschmann et al. (2017). This practice has been updated and modernised by the spread of digital technology, making it easier for anyone to add their names to petitions and less difficult for petitioners to reach a wider audience (Halpin et al., 2018). Electronic petitioning has become one of the most prominent and widely used tools of e-democracy in recent years (Wright, 2012). These elements increase the interest of these petitions as an object of study.

Our paper will be presented in two parts. In the first part, we will highlight the importance of the dynamics of the local (geographical) anchoring of the mobilisations, which is based on field networks and is favourable to gathering signatures. We will then analyse the modes of citizen appropriation of the issues raised by the petitions by studying the comments associated with the petitions on the *lapétition.be* website.

1.1. Methods

This paper is fed by international interdisciplinary research based on the collaboration of French and Belgian sociologists, political scientists, legal experts, linguists and computer scientists. Leading French-language e-petitioning sites gave them anonymised access to its entire database. This data concerns more than 15,000 petitions posted between the 31st of October 2006, the date of the site's first petition, and the 12th of February 2015, the date on which the database was extracted. The database contains a total of almost 3.8 million signatures, which corresponds to just over 700,000 email addresses that are still valid.

Among those data, our study focuses on the three largest petitions in terms of the number of signatures (each including more than 4000 signatures) in the ‘environment’ category for two main reasons: the set of these e-petitions stands out in several signatures, and the second is that “dealing with environmental issues is a long-standing and increasing focus of activism” (Wolbring, G. & Gill, S. 2023). Thus, it may give key insights that could be applied to other social movements.

In most cases, we can list a set of data related to each petition that was assigned to the ‘environment’ category (text, time of launch, initiator of the petition – who is also responsible for assigning it to the ‘environment category’ – the dynamics of the organisation of the petition, information on the signatories: first name, postcode and municipality, other petitions signed and initiated, the time when they signed). The specific features of this database also make it possible to go beyond the traditional forms of study of mobilisation actions. Whereas these usually focus on a single fact (so-

and-so mobilised in such-and-such a way at such-and-such a time), without being able to question the meaning of this commitment except after the event, the comments left on the site make it possible to analyse the tone that the signatories give to their commitment at the very moment they make it.

It should be noted that the three organisers of the petitions are connected to institutions or at least associations. This includes two locally elected officials: Claire Vandevivere, Municipal Environment Officer in the commune of Jette, to the north of the centre of Brussels, and Zoubida Jellab, municipal councillor for the commune of Bruxelles-Ville and member of the Green Group. Finally, petition 13119, entitled 'Save the Tridaine spring and the Rochefort Trappist Monastery', containing 11,034 signatures, was initiated by the Rochefort Trappist Monastery, which used the services of a communication agency to launch its petition.

Table 1. Characteristics of the three petitions studied¹

Chronological order	Petition number	Title	Launch date	Initiator/s	Place of origin	Number of signatures	Type of dynamics
1	8629	Stop the widening of the ring road. Preserve the Laerbeek Wood	03/11 /2010	Claire Vandevivere, councillor of the commune of Jette	Jette	4753	local
2	9706	Stop the concreting of the avenue du Port and the felling of 300 trees	09/04 /2011	Zoubida Jellab, elected representative belonging to the Green Group	Brussels	8915	Global /local

¹ The original titles of the petitions are, respectively, 'Non à l'élargissement du ring. Oui à la préservation du Bois du Laerbeek', 'Non au bétonnage de l'avenue du Port et à l'abattage des 300 platanes', and 'Sauvez la source de Tridaine et la Trappiste de Rochefort!'.

				M-C Reine Stéphanie, President of the neighbourhood committee			
3	13119	Save the Tridaine spring and the Rochefort Trappist Monastery	18/06 /2013	Abbaye des trappistes de Rochefort	Rochefort	11,034	local

Despite the discontinuous and non-linear nature of the lapetition.be website, access to its database was all the more useful for monitoring signatories and their change over time (in terms of their territorial situation and the nature of their comments), as we were able to compare them with external sources (interviews, news media, websites) that provided information about their repertoires of action. Combining these variables allowed us to understand an online petition's dissemination process better. Thus, depending on the case, either the forms of mobilisation used or how the object of the mobilisation is presented may explain the success or failure of the petition without it being possible to determine in advance which of these elements will be predominant. The effects of the website's design will not be discussed here; we refer interested readers to a previous publication that analyses the 'platform effect'.

Table 2. Analysis variables and local/global petitioner dynamics

Analysis variables	Local dynamics	Global dynamics
Signatories' place of residence	Location close to the object	National, international
Signatories' profile	Greater proportion of signatures from first-time users of the website	Greater proportion of signatures from regular users of the website
Membership of networks	Offline/online	Mainly online

Platform effects	Insignificant	Significant
------------------	---------------	-------------

In order to better understand these territorial logics, which are based on other studies using other investigative devices (Boyadjian, 2016), other types of information should also be used. Thus, the repertoires of action used can, depending on the case, either relocalise (when local activist networks play a greater role) or delocalise (through the role played by national media, social networks, and the platform effect) the petitioning dynamic. To this end, we collected, both from social networks and news media, elements relating to the petitions concerned (calls for signatures, debates, actions related to the petition, the mobilised actors found on the web, Facebook and in the media (national and regional press, TV broadcasts). We then proceeded to identify the initiators of the petitions (from the two files in the database listing the initiators of petitions or their signatures, if they are present). This was followed by interviews when possible (unfortunately, only a limited number of 4 interviews were carried out, as it was difficult to find people after several years, and sometimes, when we managed to do so, our request for an interview was refused). We interviewed one elected representative initiator of one of the studied e-petitions, one person from a communication agency that launched the call for signatures of another e-petition. Finally, two activists engaged in the social movements supporting one of the e-petitions.

Broadly speaking, we will use the term 'local anchoring' (or local dynamics) when the petition's text, the starting point of the dynamics of gathering signatures, and the repertoires of action are local (petitions 13119 and 8629). Only petition 9706 presents a hybrid character with regard to these three criteria since these two dimensions (the local and the global) are present at two different moments of its life cycle (see Table 1). The three petitions are notable for their local anchoring.

2. Part 1: Local anchoring as the driving force for an online petition

In order to better understand the importance of local anchoring in the geographical dissemination of an online petition, we will try to cast light on two questions: To what extent do local online and offline modes of action favour local dissemination? What influence is exerted by the mobilised networks on the profiles of the signatories?

3. The importance of local online/offline repertoires of action

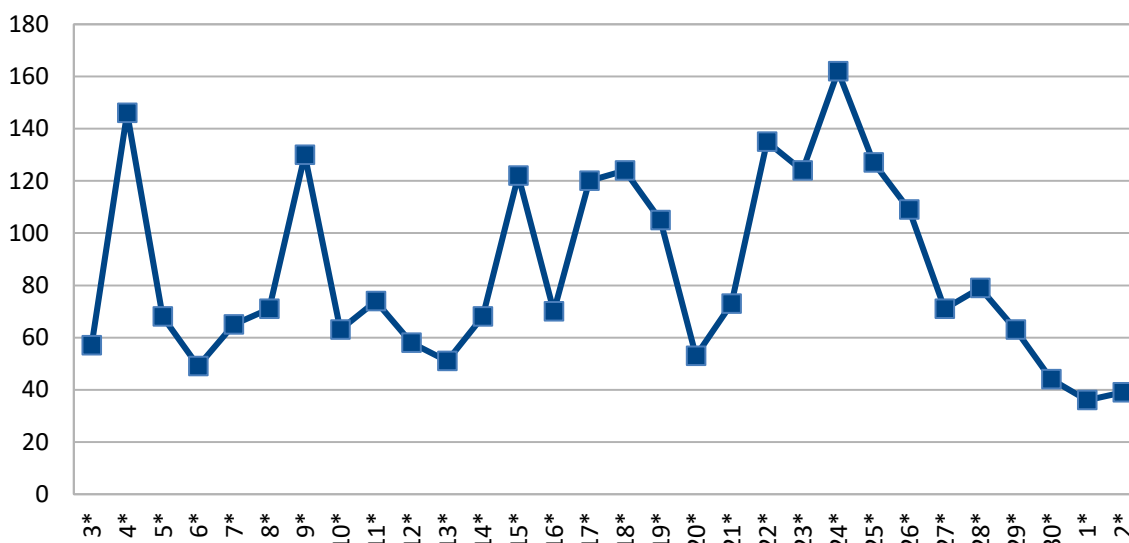
Studies in France (Bousquet et al., 2017) and outside France (Tufekci & Freelon, 2013) have highlighted the mobilising role that online petitions can play in relation to an offline mass movement, notably in relation to demonstrations.² Access to the petition. The database will allow us to identify

² See also the case of the online petition 'For lower fuel prices at the pump!' in October 2018, which gathered 1.2 million signatures and contributed to the emergence of the 'Gilets Jaunes' (Yellow Vests) movement in early November of that year.

the links between the different repertoires of action used and the change in the number of signatures gathered over time for the online petitions studied.

Petitions 8629 ('Stop the widening of the ring road [...]') and 13119 ('Save the Tridaine spring and the Rochefort Trappist Monastery') are characterised, on the one hand, by a strong local offline mobilisation (a press conference at the launch of the petition, creation of a collective in support of protecting the environment), and on the other hand, by the prevalent use of the internet (via the creation of the website www.tridaine.be, the setting up of a Facebook page, or the use of social networks to promote local mobilisation). For example, the municipality of Jette (petition 8629) repeatedly used demonstrations (five between the 3rd of November 2010 and the 4th of October 2015) and the use of spectacular and festive repertoires of action (a depiction of the mayor transformed into Papa Smurf or Obelix) in order to arouse the interest of the media and the local population. The link between online and offline mobilisation can also be measured by the fact that the petition collected 5000 paper signatures, presumably local ones,³ in addition to the more than 4000 signatures collected on the lapetition.be website.

Figure 1. Petition 8629 ('Stop the widening of the ring road [...]'): number of signatures per day (from 3 November to 3 December 2010)



Many of the peaks in signatures for petition 8629 correspond to the dates of local mobilisations. The collection of signatures over the first 30 days is very erratic, with several peaks. The first one (5th of November) corresponds to the launch of the petition and the distribution of the city newspaper 'Jette info' no. 180, which is distributed to all addresses in the commune of Jette. The announcement, on the 17th–18th of November, of the action 'Stop the widening of the ring road. Preserve the Laerbeek Wood' on various websites, corresponding to a new peak. The preparations and actions

³ This seems to be confirmed by its initiator, Ms Vandevivere (see excerpts from her interview below).

surrounding the first demonstration in the Laerbeek Wood on the 27th of November may explain the last peak (21st–25th of November), especially as it also corresponds to the publication of several articles in major national news media on DH.net and Lalibre.net on 20 November, and the launch of a Facebook page devoted to the defence of the Laerbeek Wood. However, this national media coverage and the use of digital means still led to gathering mostly local signatures.

As for petition 13119 petition ('Save the Tridaine spring [...]'), which began on 18 June, with a peak of around 400 signatures from the 19th to the 22nd of June, two-thirds of the total number of signatures were gathered during June (more than 7000 signatures), at a time of intense local mobilisation. In the following month. The petition collected only a little over 1000 signatures during lesser mobilisation. The initial increase in signatures can also be linked to the context: the day the petition was launched, the 18th of June, was marked by a press conference and the creation of a website and a Facebook page. Three days later, the Trappist monks launched an appeal to the citizens of the communes of Rochefort and Marche-en-Famenne, which border the site of the Tridaine spring, and the website created by the monks relaid. This appeal asked them to send a letter supporting the petition to the authorities of these two communes before the 28th of June, the end of the public enquiry concerning the Tridaine spring. The 28th of June marked the peak of the mobilisation, with the collection of 1300 signatures. As the 28th of June approached, the number of signatures continued to increase, demonstrating the importance of local anchoring in mobilising petitioners.

Despite the abolition of any territorial anchoring that digital technology offers, the signatures of the petitions examined are, in fact, dependent on concrete networks, which are largely determined by geographical constraints. This observation confirms that physical networks are not replaced by virtual networks (Lasserre, 2000). Moreover, the geographical spread of signatures confirms that the internet constitutes 'one space among others' (Greffet, 2012) and is connected to physical space. Social networks (Facebook) and a website can, however, constitute tools that promote local mobilisation through the localised information they provide about the movement.

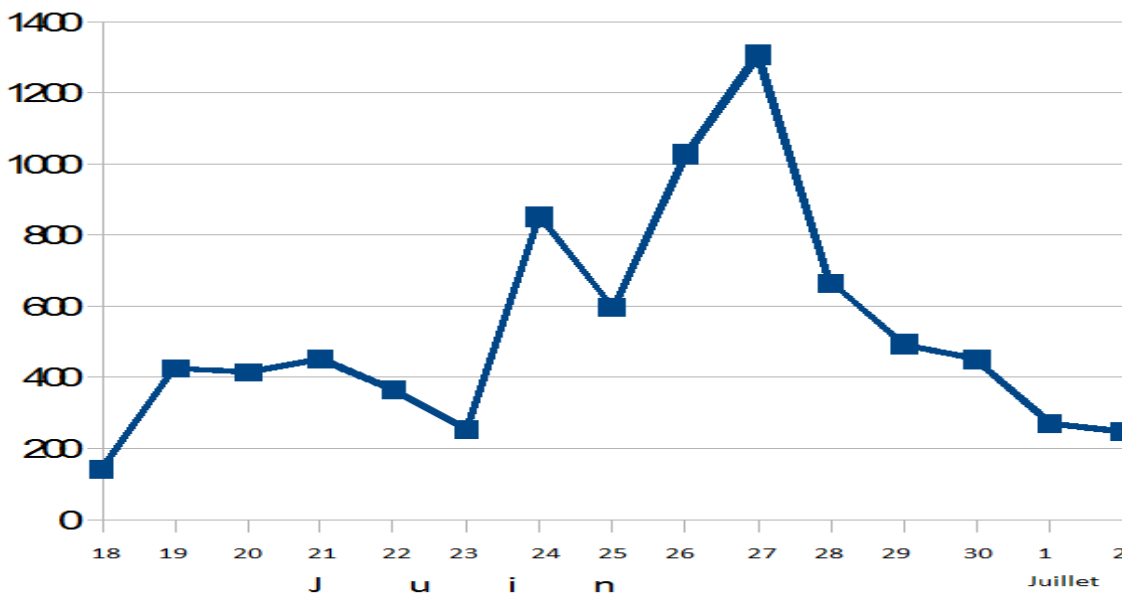


Figure 2. Petition 13119 ('Save the Tridaine spring [...]'): distribution of signatures in the first 15 days (18 June to 2 July 2013)

3.1. Signatory profiles and networks mobilised

In 2015, S. Wright called for work on the distinction between transient participants and 'super-participants'. In an Australian study of over 17,000 e-petitions over five years, D. Halpen et al. (2018) observed that 76% of signatories signed only one petition. The authors concluded that it can be assumed that the individual decision to sign a petition, mostly using one's name publicly, is not a casual, unthinking act, which thereby challenges the 'clicktivism' hypothesis. The authors called for further studies focused on the signatories of petitions, which we have attempted to do by adding a third variable (that of signatories' membership of networks) to our research framework.

Indeed, petitions 8629 and 13119 are notable in gathering, above all, signatories who are not accustomed to using the petition website. This can be explained by the scale of the awareness-raising actions that were carried out to attract new signatures. Online and offline strategies were closely linked. For example, the publicity surrounding the online posting of petition 8629 'Stop the widening of the ring road [...]' on the lapetition.be website was followed by a physical mobilisation of citizens of Jette, as Claire Vandevivere explains:⁴ "citizens could sign or take sheets of paper to get signatures from other people. One person brought me fifty signatures from their shop. We contacted the neighbourhood committees...".

⁴ Interview conducted on the 13th of June 2017 with Ms Claire Vandevivere, Municipal Environment Officer.

Table 3, on the propensity of the signatories of petition 13119 ‘Save the Tridaine spring [...]’ to sign other petitions, according to their place of residence, indicates the diversity of signatory profiles.

Table 3: Propensity of 13,119 signatories to sign petitions by place of residence

Place of residence	% at least ten petitions signed	% at least five petitions signed in the ‘environment’ category	N=
Rochefort	5.1%	2.1%	428
Rochefort periphery	6.9%	1.3%	534
Bruxelles-Capitale region	15.3%	4.1%	1208
Rest of Belgium	8.4%	1.9%	6049
France	2.9%	0.6%	1150

This table presents three interesting results. Firstly, it can be seen that Rochefort and its periphery have only a relatively low proportion of individuals signing ten or more petitions on the *la-petition.be* website. The explanation for this probably lies in the fact that the determinants of the decision to sign are more related to local and personal networks, as the contextual elements strongly suggest (see above). Conversely, a very high proportion of residents of the Bruxelles-Capitale region sign a high number of petitions. This is more a case of a population that signs either as ‘consumers’ of petitions who frequently access the site or as individuals situated in highly politicised networks. The third interesting result is that of France: few petitioners residing in France sign a significant number of petitions on the site. Remarkably, however, among the first signatories in this petition who are resident in France, there is a particularly high proportion of individuals who frequently access the website: 6 out of the first 20 signatories resident in France (or 30% of them) had signed at least ten petitions on the site. They probably played a driving role in the dissemination of the petition.

Unlike the petitions discussed above (8629 and 13119), which are characterised by local mobilisation preceding network mobilisations, petition 9706, ‘Stop the concreting of the avenue du Port and the felling of 300 plane trees’ in Brussels, is characterised by the temporal disjunction between network mobilisations and local mobilisations. Whereas the petition was launched in April 2011, with a little more than 1000 signatures, the local mobilisation only became intense in August, resulting in the second peak of signatures (almost 5000) out of 8915 signatures.

Table 4: Petition 9706 ('Stop the concreting of the avenue du Port [...]'): signatory profiles in April-July and August 2011

Period	Number of signatures	% at least 50 signatures on the website	% at least 100 signatures on the website	% at least eight signatures in the 'environment' category
April-July 2011	2463	2.6	1.3	4.1
August 2011	4990	0.9	0.3	1.1

Between April and July 2011, a large proportion of the site's regular users signed the petition. These are probably activists in major political networks interested in environmental issues.⁵ The platform then plays a role in publicising and centralising the efforts of the organisers of the petitions. At the same time, local actions in the neighbourhood ('adopt a tree' events, posters, picnics, etc.) attracted the attention of the Belgian media. In August 2011, when the situation was becoming more urgent since the building work was beginning and the felling of trees was scheduled, a very large mobilisation developed beyond the circles of the earlier activist groups and managed to rally shopkeepers, residents of the avenue du Port, and several associations, including those devoted to defending the city's historical heritage. Nightly rounds were organised to prevent the felling of trees. A giant poster was put up on the avenue between the 3rd and 8th of August 2011. The media coverage of the cause also included television reports, which were broadcast by national channels.⁶ This petition thus presents a hybrid profile combining, in the first instance, a large proportion of the site's regular users and, later, an intense mobilisation of local citizen movements. This mobilisation, combining both online actions and actions on the local terrain, led to the building site shutting down on the 5th of September 2011 and abandoning plans for felling trees. This last petition reveals that, in order to collect a large number of signatures and lead to a change in the public policy being targeted, a major local mobilisation does not necessarily have to take place at the moment of the launch of the petition, but can occur at a later stage.

Adding these repertoires of action accelerates local mobilisation, especially when they take place at strategic moments: the launch of a petition, a call for the mobilisation of citizens and, even more,

⁵ This is the only one of the three petitions studied where the share of signatories who had signed at least 8 petitions in the 'environment' category (4.1% in April-July and 1.1% in August) is higher than the share of signatories who had signed at least 50 petitions on the site (2.6% and 0.9%, respectively), i.e. the signatories to this petition have a greater interest in environmental issues than those in the other six petitions.

⁶ The interview conducted in November 2018, with a local resident who was involved in this cause, highlights that the local mobilisation during the summer and the media coverage that followed were decisive in the abandonment of the project.

the imminence of an irreversible process to be stopped. In the latter case, the cause defended by the petition and the risk of its failure become more concrete and tangible. Moreover, these different moments are conducive to national television coverage of the cause, which inevitably encourages new signatures. The predominantly local dimension of the mobilisations explains the unique profile of the signatories, who are not accustomed to the website.

This territorial anchoring is all the more significant as it can generate paper-based petitions alongside online petitions. It tends to transform ordinary citizens into activists searching for new paper signatures and potential first-time demonstrators. This confirms the analysis mentioned above, based on petitions in Australia (Halpen et al., 2018), which challenges the 'clicktivism' hypothesis. Our research also tends to corroborate those analyses that conclude that new technologies do not challenge traditional modes of action (Margolis & Resnick, 2000). The media coverage of the cause, the mobilisation of social networks, and the use of the internet all make it possible to extend the geographical reach of this initial logic of mobilisation, thereby supporting a transformation of the petitioners' comments.

4. Part 2. From the territorial enlargement of the mobilisation to the transformation of the petitioners' comments

Our objective here is, on the one hand, to highlight how a mobilisation that is initially local can expand to become global (i.e., national or even international) by combining a static approach (based on an opposition between local and global dissemination) and a dynamic approach (one that views the local and global as being intertwined with each other). On the other hand, we will try to understand the influence of this widening mobilisation on the changes in the signatories' comments.

4.1. Local and global dissemination of petitions: between static and dynamic approaches

We will first consider the geographical spread of signatories in terms of an opposition between the petitions' local and global dimensions. Petition 13119, 'Save the Tridaine spring [...]', confirms the importance of the close interweaving between local mobilisation – which, as we have seen, includes local online and offline modes of action – and the national or even international dissemination of the petition, which we can follow over time. For a petition to widen its spectrum of dissemination (beyond the signatories in a given district or municipality or even its periphery), it must also pertain to an issue that extends beyond local interests and relates to the general interest. This is a matter of social construction, as highlighted by framing theories (Benford et al., 2012). Signing a petition can thus be understood as the expression of a successful communication strategy through accepting the interpretive framework proposed by the petition text (Contamin, 2007). Widening this frame of interpretation to include the issue of environmental protection without reducing it to a Community issue (Petition 8629) would encourage a wider geographical spread of signatures.

The geographical approach to the dissemination of petitions, based on geolocation data or, in their absence, on indirect sources (interviews, newspapers, websites, etc.) leads us to emphasise the importance of the centre-periphery logic; this tends to suggest that the success of this mobilisation

strategy relies primarily on local networks. The contribution of the commune to the total number of signatures is indeed the strongest on the first day of the petition and then on the following days (29.1% and then around 10% of the daily number of signatures between the 19th and the 21st of June, compared with an average of 3.8% for the whole period of the petition); the contribution made by residents of Marche-en-Famenne (a neighbouring commune of Rochefort) is also at its highest level on the day of the petition's launch (5.6%, compared with 1.3% for the whole period); from the 3rd day it is then the area immediately to the west of Rochefort⁷ that contributes the greatest number of signatures (6% on the 3rd day and 5.5% on the 6th day, compared with 2.2% for the whole period); finally, Brussels and the rest of Belgium are substantially mobilised from the 28th of June, which corresponds to the 11th day of the petition—respectively around 60% and 13%, compared with 54.7% and 10.4% for the whole period); France and the rest of the world only contribute large numbers of signatures later on.

We can hypothesise that the dissemination of petition 8629, 'Stop the widening of the ring road [...]', follows the same centre-periphery logic despite the absence of data on the geolocation of signatories for this petition.⁸ According to the Municipal Environment Officer of Jette, within five months, the signatures were coming from Jette and Brussels and the periphery (Vilvoorde, Grand-Bigard, Wemmel, Dilbeek, etc.). Indeed, the success of the mobilisation of the petition against the ring road was such that it led Ms Vandevivere, the promoter of this petition, to launch the online petition 16432, entitled 'Stop flights over the Brussels region at inappropriate times' (Paye et al., 2017), on the 20th of October 2015, which was less successful than the first one, even though the means used were the same (a little more than 2,000 signatories).⁹ She explains the large number of signatures of the first petition with reference to the object of the petition (the Laerbeek Wood), for which, in her words, 'there was clearly more sympathy because of the idea of this green space, the greenery and the trees. Whereas, for those who do not live in Brussels, regarding flights passing overhead when you live in Sambreville (which is not affected by the noise of aeroplanes), there is less solidarity with this issue.'

In other words, in Ms Vandevivere's view, the object of the petition regarding flights over Brussels, which was marked by a NIMBY mobilisation (Freundenburg & Pastor, 1992; Jobert, 1998), explains the lower level of mobilisation in this case, resulting from an inability to extend interest in the

⁷ This phenomenon is also found on the same dates, but at a lower level, in the area to the east of Rochefort (1.2% and 1.6%, compared to 0.8% for the whole period).

⁸ This petition does not record the signatories' commune, postcode, region, country, or nationality; this seems to indicate that the variables were not visible to the petitioners (either their own details or those of other petitioners) at the time.

⁹ It should be pointed out that the date on which we extracted data for petition 16432 (shortly before the interview of the 13th of June 2017 with Ms Vandevivere) differs from the date for the other petitions, since this petition was launched after we extracted data from the database on the 12th of February 2015.

petition beyond the Jette agglomeration and its surrounding communes, despite its organisers using the same means of raising awareness. Thus, out of 2257 signatures in favour of the petition regarding flights over Brussels, there is a significant over-representation of the inhabitants of Jette (980 of the signatories, which corresponds to 1.9% of the population of the commune of 53,000 inhabitants, but 43.4% of the petitioners), which is far from negligible. For residents of the communes neighbouring Jette, contributing by signing a petition to the proposed change in flight paths would entail the risk of being affected later on by those redirected flights. This would result in a lesser propensity for wider dissemination of the petition and a very local anchoring of the mobilisation. At first sight,

Therefore, the most crucial factor for the petition's effectiveness would lie in its ability to overcome opposition between communities, thanks to an overarching general interest.¹⁰ As the Municipal Environment Officer of Jette points out, the Laerbeek Wood is a community-based issue, as opposed to another community embodied by the power of Flemish representatives. According to Ms Vandevivere: 'in the development of this whole economic area, if they (the Flemish) want to widen the ring road, it is to allow the continued expansion of cargo traffic from the port to Zaventem'. In her view, this citizen mobilisation makes it possible to overcome political and inter-community power struggles and to promote a common-sense response to a project that the Flemish want in order to sustain the economic development of the Flemish part of the city, but which would have negative repercussions for the inhabitants of Brussels. Thus, the call for citizen mobilisation is presented as a means of overcoming community-based 'special interests', in the name of the general interest of environmental protection, symbolised in this case by the risk of destruction of the Laerbeek Wood. This amounts to a challenge to the theory defended by the proponents of representative democracy, according to which representatives alone embody the general interest. At the same time, citizens are marked by the diversity of their situation and their social position. In this case, democracy is not reduced to the practice of elections by universal suffrage but is embodied in a dialogue seeking the common good.

So far, we have contrasted the local and global dimensions of the geographical dissemination of petitions. These two concepts have the advantage of clearly marking the differences between local anchoring and dissemination beyond the infra-national level. However, the static nature of these concepts makes it more difficult to grasp the dynamics between the local and the global. The concepts of territorialisation and deterritorialisation are suitable for thinking more about the local and the global in greater depth, no longer in terms of opposition but rather in processes that intertwine.

A double logic of 'territorialisation' (at the local level) and 'deterritorialisation' (towards the national or even international level) is indeed apparent in the petitions 'Stop the widening of the ring road [...]' and 'Save the Tridaine spring [...]'. The logic of territorialisation tends to highlight the

¹⁰ It may seem strange for a commune to use a petition as a means of putting pressure on the Flemish regional authorities, who were supporting the project for a widening of the ring road. Indeed, according to a number of authors, e-petitioning is practised more by members of society who aim to challenge authority figures in the system of representative democracy (see our introduction) than by those who support it, let alone by political representatives themselves.

importance of local mobilisation in the petition's success (measured by the number of signatories). This local mobilisation relates to the territorial dimension of the object of the petition (i.e., the Laerbeek Wood and the Tridaine spring in Rochefort). It tends to involve primarily (at least initially) the inhabitants who live near the site connected to the petition. This local dimension is also characterised by the means used to promote the mobilisation, whether they are offline tools (a paper petition, demonstrations, a local newspaper, etc.) or online tools that aim to promote local mobilisation (website, Facebook page, dissemination of information through social networks, etc.), which are closely connected. The local nature of the body targeted by the petition (the company l'Hoist in Rochefort, the Flemish regional government of Brussels) adds to this territorialisation.

The temporal and geolocation data associated with the variables 'repertoires of action' and 'profile of signatories' (petition 13119) allow us to consider the role of the periphery in the dissemination process. The dissemination of the petition from the centre to the periphery occurs within two days of the dissemination of the petition in Rochefort and its neighbouring commune, Marche-en-Famenne, which is to say that this is the time needed to disseminate the information coming from Rochefort (we should recall that the press conference, the creation of the website, and that of the Facebook page all occurred on the same date as the launch of the petition on the 18th of June). Moreover, our reading of Table 3 shows the very strong proximity between the profile of the signatories in Rochefort and those in its periphery. This set of elements leads us to think that the logic of dissemination is, above all, territorial, with a delay effect due to the distance from the place of origin of the petition.

Petition 9706, on the other hand, stands out from petitions 8629 and 13119 by the inversion of the terms of the process. In this case, deterritorialisation precedes territorialisation. This inversion does not, however, call into question the importance of local mobilisation. In one month (August 2011), this petition gathered nearly 5000 signatures, compared to half that number in the four previous months (April-July 2011), which nuances the observation, made by some, of the importance of the first days of online petitions for the dynamics of gathering signatures (Yasseri et al., 2017). The study of this petition indicates that mobilisation through networks is not necessarily sufficient to lead to the success of a petition. Indeed, it was not until the beginning of September that the Flemish Minister of Public Works in the government of the Bruxelles-Capitale region readdressed the decision to cut down the plane trees.

Beyond the periphery, the capacity of an e-petition to influence decision-makers depends on the close interweaving of these two logics of territorialisation and deterritorialisation, which involve the combination of online/offline actions. For mobilisation to be both local and national (or even international), beyond the repertoires of action used, it seems that the object of the petition or the arguments that accompany it must be conducive to appropriation by non-resident signatories, which thereby shows that the 'NIMBY syndrome' has been overcome (compare this with the relatively unsuccessful petition relating to flight paths over Brussels, which remained limited to a 'NIMBY' logic) and that the cause, which might initially seem to be one of local interest, can instead be interpreted in terms of general interest (Contamin et al., 2020).

4.2. Centre-periphery logic and change in the comments of signatories

Analysing the comments attached to online petitions can provide a better understanding of signatories' motivations and forms of commitment and how these can change over time (Bousquet et al., 2017).

4.2.1. Broadening civic debate and participation

One can observe a parallel dynamic of geographic expansion and increasing generality of the argumentation displayed in the comments. The hypothesis of a local point of departure for the signatories of petitions 8629 and 13119 is confirmed by the comments attached to the text of each petition. A closer look at the comments made on 4 and 9 November 2010 (the beginning of petition 8629) shows that almost 22% of them (12 out of 56) refer to the proximity of the commentators to the Laerbeek Wood and the negative consequences they feel. The author of the first comment, of the 4th of November, links their proximity to the ring road with their opposition to its expansion: 'as a neighbour of the ring road, I am absolutely against its widening'. The second comment on the same day highlights the negative consequences of the project on the heritage of the inhabitants of the site: 'Stop the noise and all this pollution; Brussels must remain a healthy city with our parks and woods'. On the first day of the 'Save the Tridaine spring [...]' petition, 14% (3 out of 22) of the comments also indicate a close relationship with the object of the petition: 'we cannot denature and endanger our beautiful city of Rochefort' (4th comment), whereas this is true of less than 2% (out of 53 comments) on the following day, and of none of the 119 comments that were made on the seventh day. We can observe that the number of comments increases with time and, therefore, with the greater extension of the petition's geographical dissemination. However, those comments are also disconnected from local life. This seems to attest to a reduced involvement in the petition by local petitioners, who had been more numerous in the first few days. Indeed, even if we can also hypothesise that commenting may be more common among regular users of the site, who have a greater mastery of it and its features, the analysis of the comments clarifies who is signing and what for.

The change in the nature of the comments seems to correspond to the increase in the geographical range of the petitioners. Thus, a broader aspect of the issue may appear only at a later stage (as occurred for the petition 'Stop the widening of the ring road [...]'). With a small number of exceptions (only three comments, such as this one from the 4th of November: 'It would be criminal to surrender even an inch of land to Flanders!'), the reference to the inter-community aspect is only mentioned from the 17th day ('No to the Flemish diktat'; 19 November, 14:09), and becomes more abundantly present on the 21st day, on which a little more than 30% of the comments refer to it (10 comments out of 33). This dissemination on a national or even international level can be accompanied by an increase in the generality of the discourse (as for the petition 'Save the Tridaine spring'), where an opposition emerges between, on the one hand, the interests of capital and profitability, and, on the other hand, the interests of nature, society, and children. 'How can they compare 20 years of limestone extraction (a non-renewable resource) to the sustainability of an aquifer that provides a renewable source of high-quality water?' (the 24th of June).

Furthermore, the more the comments are detached from the local context and refer to a general controversy (such as the competition between the Walloons and the Flemish), the more they seem

to converge. The Flemish are strongly stigmatised: there is talk of a 'diktaat', 'arrogance', and 'stupidity'. Ministers are sometimes attacked personally with reference to another Flemish project with an impact on the inhabitants of Brussels: 'No to this stupid idea, is that great Flemish turkey ['dinde', a sexist term of abuse implying stupidity] Grouwels¹¹ defending this project? How about we talk about the planes flying over the gardens of Jette from 6 am onwards... good luck to you (the 23rd of November, 17:28).

The inter-community issue, which is barely mentioned in the text of the petition ('The Flemish government plans to [...]'), becomes central in these comments, constituting a much more political reading of the issue beyond its local aspects. On the contrary, the text of the petition focuses primarily on the environmental issue, indicating a complete reappropriation of the petition by these signatories. This reappropriation tends to invalidate the hypothesis of the Municipal Environment Officer of Jette, according to which the object would concern a more general 'environmental' issue. In contrast, it appears to be more of an 'inter-community' issue. By entering into the logic of Flemish-Walloon community relations, the driving force behind the signatures becomes more of a community issue than an environmental issue. This hypothesis will likely help us understand the dissemination of the petition from the local to the national and international levels. This is in line with the theory of the strength of weak ties, according to which the passage into other spheres (here into the inter-community dimension of weak ties) allows one to move beyond the proximal space of mobilisation characterised by strong ties (Granovetter, 1983; Fallery, 2007). However, according to Mark Granovetter, weak ties, which evolve in wider spheres, enable us to get in touch with a greater number of people, just as social networks do.

The temporal proximity to one another of the comments that focus on the more global aspect of the issues seems to attest to a reciprocal influence between them as if the fact of reading the previous comment favoured the repetition of the same theme. Here, we find a particular modality of the platform effect due to the presentation of the comments in chronological order. Thus, on the 23rd of November, the first six comments that refer to the inter-community aspect were posted between 10:22 and 14:53, and four others were posted between 17:28 and 20:41. For example: 'We cannot let something like this happen, it will only increase the powers of the Dutch speakers' (the 23rd of November, 12:43); and then a few minutes later, picking up the themes of the earlier comment, 'The Flemish are out of their minds, there are already too many vehicles on the road – and what are they doing about the CO2 – and what about the inhabitants of this region?' (the 23rd of November, 13:01). We can hypothesise that this form of politicisation of the petition is reinforced by the organisation of the first demonstration, on the 27th of November, and the media coverage of the cause at the national level, which may also have presented the issue from an inter-community perspective.

11 B. Grouwels was at this time a Flemish member of the Brussels Regional Government (which, constitutionally, is required to be composed of equal numbers of French and Flemish speakers).

4.2.2. Appropriating the petition's message

Aside from the differences between these two petitions, they are both characterised by an opposition between the text of the petition and the tone used by their signatories, which highlights an appropriation of the message of the petition by the signatories. The tone adopted by the presentation texts is neutral, even administrative. These texts foreground the rationality of their claims by presenting arguments in favour of the petition. For example, the text of petition 8629 is presented as a logical demonstration: 'The government plans to enlarge the ring road... In order to do this [emphasis ours], 5 hectares of the Laerbeek Wood will have to disappear. This is why the commune of Jette... The widening of the ring road will not only cause... it will also produce... The widening of the ring road will, therefore, have negative consequences... Whereas today....' Similarly, the text of petition 13119 is presented in the form of an explanation that emphasises the negative consequences of the project in a calm manner. Only the titles of the two petitions can be considered confrontational, with the use of capital letters, the rhetorical use of 'Non à' and 'Oui à', and the use of the imperative in the injunction 'Sauvez' (see n. one above for the original titles of the petitions in French).

In contrast, the tone of the signatories appears more emotional. Numerous exclamation marks and question marks, and sometimes the use of capital letters, are intended to signify the signatories' vehement opposition to the proposed projects. The use of terms such as 'unthinkable', 'scandalous', 'unimaginable', 'shameful and stupid' (petition 13119), or 'aberrant', 'absurd', 'aberration', 'massacre', 'unacceptable', 'criminal' (petition 8629), demonstrates this strong opposition to the project. This is consistent with the findings of analyses that emphasise the link between internet technologies and the production and propagation of emotions (Benski et al., 2013). Indeed, recent studies in neuroscience highlight the importance of emotion in cognitive processes and decision-making (Lampoltshammer, 2019; Marcus, 2008), as well as in mobilisations (Traïni, 2009), which was demonstrated by the record 17 million signatories that were gathered for an online petition following the emotion elicited by the death of George Floyd on the 25th of May 2020 in Minneapolis.

The availability of data, allowing us to track the geolocation of signatories over time, reveals the importance for organisers of petitions first to establish a local mobilisation and then disseminate this action more widely (petition 13119). It also shows that the object of the petition can act as either a brake or an accelerator to its dissemination, irrespective of the repertoires of action used to support it. The use of petitions by certain elected officials also makes it possible to overcome the inertia of political divisions on issues of general interest (petition 9706).

Finally, the analysis of signatories' comments highlights the fact that, although we cannot speak of a deliberative public space (Monnyer-Smith & Wojcik, 2012, pp. 24-49), they nevertheless represent spaces of freedom for a certain number of signatories, allowing them to move beyond the initially local character of the issue by emphasising its global dimension. Despite the effects of domination that are inherent in petitions, inasmuch as the petition is presented to potential signatories 'from above', the signatories themselves can reappropriate tools, such as online comments, and thus, take back power from the organisers of the petitions (Contamin, 2001). This desire to take back power can be observed in the extent of the reinterpretation of the petitions in terms of inter-community relations (the opposition between Flemings and Walloons) or in terms of ideological values (the opposition between the relentless pursuit of financial interests and the need to protect nature).

5. Discussion

We would like to discuss how our findings can contribute to the current challenges of participation and climate activism. As our dataset goes back from 2010 to 2015, climate activism has changed since then.

However, recent profound changes in environmental movements confirm many of our analyses. Thus, we find this intertwining of online and offline mobilisations with the use of online petitions. For example, 2018, a year marked by numerous natural disasters, a UN warning and an alarming IPCC report, corresponds to an explosion of climate activism. In May, the Extinction Rebellion movement was launched in the UK, calling for actions to denounce the inaction of world leaders on climate change. In August, Gréta Thunberg launched Friday for Future in Sweden, an international student strike movement to raise awareness of the climate emergency. The first climate march took place on the 8th of September. In October, the collectif citoyen pour le climat was created in France to coordinate ideas and actions to protect the climate. In December, the online petition "l'affaire du siècle" gathered 1.8 million signatures in 10 days, the highest number of signatures for an online petition in France. The petition was launched by four associations (Fondation pour la nature de l'homme, Greenpeace France, Notre affaire à tous and Oxfam France) with the aim of suing the French government for inaction in the fight against global warming. The case will culminate on the 3rd of February 2021, with a ruling by the Administrative Court recognising the State's guilt.

E-petitioning is merging with novel forms of activism into some democratic innovation. In parallel with this environmental movement, we have recently seen an increase in the number of online petitions, which now exceeds one million signatories¹². The coronavirus epidemic and containment measures have added to this movement. People who could not march needed other ways to make their voices heard, leading to an acceleration of digital mobilisation (Cortes 2023)¹³. According to the former director of change.org France, the online petition is no longer a simple indicator for measuring engagement but a central tool for organising mobilisation (Durieux, 2021), such as the Green-Voice online petition platform. Launched by Greenpeace at the end of 2020, it aims to encourage the mobilisation of citizens in favour of the environment by offering the possibility of transforming one's petition into a successful citizens' campaign¹⁴.

12 In 2016, the petition against the labour reform law gathered 1.4 million signatures, and in 2018, the petition for lower fuel prices (which heralded the Yellow Vest movement) reached 1.2 million, less than the "affair of the century" petition, which gathered 1.8 million signatures.

13 In his study, Nicolas Cortes points out that since people can't meet in squares or markets, they meet on social networks, especially Facebook, which encourages cooperation and a new solidarity.

14 Of the 700 petitions put online in 3 years of existence, several have been victorious in various local battles.

At first sight, these developments seem to undermine some of our conclusions. For example, the climate issue tends to broaden the scope of environmental action at the national, transnational and international levels at the expense of local demands. Moreover, since the coronavirus epidemic, everyday and political practices have been digitised. Every environmental collective now has a digital interface, a fact that could potentially devalue grassroots action, which some activists see as less effective.

However, we intend to show that our study provides a counterpoint that sheds light on these new trends. In terms of the local dimension, global demands do not undermine the importance of local mobilisations. The climate movement has understood that the local dimension is essential because the balance of power is in its favour at this scale (Lardeux, 2023a), as confirmed by the success of the three petitions we have analysed. In most cases, action at the local level will echo at the national level. The interest of our study lies in tracing how a mobilisation gradually spreads geographically and at what speed, something that recent studies based on interviews and observations are much less able to do.

At lower levels of intensity, we find two dimensions mentioned in our three petitions: the use of spectacular actions and the importance of emotion as a factor of commitment. These two dimensions are closely linked in recent movements. Faced with what young activists see as a collapse of the climate, various observers have noted a radicalisation of the various collectives around shock actions and civil disobedience, such as the attack on masterpieces. The consequence of this radicalisation is that it makes activists less popular, whereas the practices we have studied, particularly through the repertoires of spectacular actions, aim to broaden support for the cause being defended by mediating the action. As a result, environmentalists are now reflecting on the risks associated with methods that tend to frighten public opinion. This radicalisation is due to an eco-anxiety (Lardeux, 2023b) that generates a commitment marked by urgency and the potential use of violence (Cortes, 2023), confirming the importance of emotion as a vector for action.

Complementarity between online and offline action can be found in recent mobilisations, such as our petitions. However, we cannot really distinguish how the back and forth between them is organised over time. Moreover, online petitions can be the first step towards other forms of contestation.

6. Conclusion

A growing body of research situates online petitions in the repertoire of action frequently used by those participating in politics. In earlier research on political participation, petitioning was seen as an activity similar to protest and repertoires of action used by social movements (e.g., Norris, 2002). More recent research normalises petition signing as an individualised and symbolic form of participation facilitated by the digital context (e.g., Evans & Stoker, 2016; Theocharis & van Deth, 2016; Vissers & Stolle, 2014). Others have distinguished between high-cost and low-cost participatory acts, where, in the latter case, the risk (perceived or real) to participants is reduced. Although the act of signing an online petition has a low cost, it can also be seen as an appropriate tactic for bringing about change. Thus, using such tactics could reduce the risk and costs of active citizen

participation (Schumann & Klein 2015). Our results tend to show that most people do not put their names on hundreds of petitions. In fact, most selectively sign a single petition on an issue that presumably affects them more specifically than others. We examined the three most signed petitions in the 'environment' category of the lapetition.be website, combining an analysis of their petitioning dynamics and an analysis of the comments attached to those petitions, allows us to show, firstly, that there is an interwoven relationship between the local anchoring of the mobilisation and the processes of dissemination by which petitions extend from local signatories to signatories who are geographically more distant; and secondly, that it is not accurate to imagine that just anyone can sign any petition, since petitioning dynamics proceed from one person to the next, whether these dynamics start from a pre-existing local anchorage on the ground, or act through a platform effect which is dependent on the attractiveness of the petition in question.

Our results allow us to answer some of the questions raised in the literature. It seems useful to relativise the importance of the particular qualities of the organiser of the petitioner in the mobilisation dynamic. The role of the website's regular users can be decisive, even if they alone cannot explain the success of a given petition. Secondly, our results allow us to confirm the effectiveness of the dynamics of associative networks, which are connected to the use of new information and communication technologies. Finally, our results allow us to highlight the ability of signatories to appropriate the text of a petition by linking it to other spheres of debate or by connecting it to themes of sufficiently general interest to attract signatories with a wider range of profiles. This is carried out by an 'active minority' that strongly impacts online petitions, which Bermudez (2017) terms 'power users'. According to Bermudez, these petitioners are not necessarily better educated or wealthier than others but have more time to devote to this activity. The fact that some participants incur the transaction costs of registering for the lapetition.be platform to sign a single petition (and then presumably ignore numerous email invitations to sign subsequent petitions) shows, at the very least, that we should be cautious in supporting the hypothesis that signing a petition is a mindless form of 'clicktivism'.

Our study allows us to measure the evolution of environmental activism better and question the dynamics between the different vectors of mobilisation. Access to data from the GreenVoice petition site would further deepen our understanding of environmental activism.

7. References

Alathur, S., Vigneswara Ilavarasan, P., & Gupta, M.P. (2007). Citizen participation and effectiveness of e-petition: Sutharyakeralam – India. *Transforming Government: People, process and policy*, 6(4), 392–403.

Badouard, R. (2016). *Loi travail: Que peuvent les mobilisations en ligne?* *The Conversation*, 1-7. <https://theconversation.com/loitravail-que-peuvent-les-mobilisations-en-ligne-56649>

Barats, C., Dister, A., Gambette, P., Leblanc, J.M., & Leblanc, M.P. (2019, March). Ce que les données textuelles disent sur le pétitionnement en ligne: Entre contraintes et appropriation du dispositif [paper presentation]. Conference 'Internet et les nouvelles formes de participation politique', Lille.

Barats, C., Contamin, J.G., Leonard, T., & Soubiran, T. (2015, May). Les Transformations des comportements politiques au prisme de l'e-pétitionnement: Potentialités et limites d'un dispositif d'étude pluridisciplinaire [paper presentation]. Study day 'Etudier le Web politique: regards croisés', Lyon.

Baygert, N. (2014). L'Activisme numérique au regard du consumérisme politique: Pirates et Tea parties sous la loupe. *Participations*, 8, 75-95.

Benford, R.D. et al. (2012). Processus de cadrage et mouvements sociaux: Présentation et bilan. *Politix*, 3, 217-255.

Benski, T. et al. (2013). The effects of affects: The place of emotions in the mobilizations of 2011. *Current Sociology*, 61(4), 525-540.

Boure, R., Bousquet, F., & Marchand, P. (2012). Médiateurs et signataires des pétitions en ligne: L'Exemple de trois pétitions sur l'identité nationale. *Les Enjeux de l'information et de la communication*, 13(1), 99-118.

Bousquet, F., Smyrniaios, N., & Marty, E. (2017). The petition against the labor law: Construction and appropriation of the event by its actors. *Sciences de la société*, 102, 52-75. <https://journals.openedition.org/sds/docannexe/image/6934/img-11.png>

Boyadhian, J. (2016). Analyser les opinions sur internet: Enjeux théoriques et défis méthodologiques. Dalloz.

Bright, J., Bermudez, S., Pilet, J.B., & Soubiran, T. (2020). Power users in online democracy: Their origins and impact. *Information, Communication & Society* 23(13), 1838-1853.

Brusadelli, N., Martell, Y. (2022), "Réformer le militantisme, relancer le mouvement climat. Sur la genèse d'Alternatiba", *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, n° 242, P. 4-21.

Contamin, J.G. (2001). Contribution à une sociologie des usages pluriels des formes de mobilisation: L'Exemple de la pétition en France [phd]. Université de Paris-I.

Contamin, J.G. (2007), La perspective du cadrage au révélateur du pétitionnement : pour une conception pluraliste des cadres d'interprétation. 9ème Congrès de l'Association Française de Science Politique, Toulouse, France, HAL-01622756.

Contamin, J.G., Léonard, T., & Soubiran, T. (2017). Les Transformations politiques au prisme de l'e-pétitionnement: Potentialités et limites d'un dispositif d'étude pluridisciplinaire. *Réseaux* 4, 204, 97-131.

Contamin, J.G., Léonard, T., Paye, O., Soubiran, T., & Kelbel, C. (2020). Les Mobilisations pétitionnaires en ligne sur le survol de Bruxelles et de ses environs: Du Syndrome Nimby à l'effet foot-in-the-door. *Participations*, 3(3), 81-124.

Cortes, A., Leurquin, S. (2023), *L'affrontement qui vient. De l'éco-résistance à l'éco-terrorisme*, Ed. Du Rocher.

Christensen, H.S. (2012). Simply slacktivism? Internet participation in Finland. *JeDEM - EJournal of EDemocracy and Open Government*, 4(1), 1-23.

Dahlberg, L. (2011). Re-constructing digital democracy: An outline of four propositions. *New Media and Society*, 13 (6), p. 855-872. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810389569>.

Durieux, S. (2021), *Changer le Monde - Manuel d'activisme pour reprendre le pouvoir*, Ed. First.

Halpin, D., Vromen, A., Vaughan, M., & Raissi, M. (2018). Online petitioning and politics: The development of change.org in Australia. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 53(4), 428-445. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10361146.2018.1499010>.

Fallery, B. et al. (2007). Vers de nouveaux types de réseaux sur internet? Les Réseaux à liens faibles du dirigeant de petites entreprise. *Management et avenir*, 3(13), 169-181.

Fillieule, O., & Mathieu, L. (2009). Structure des opportunités politiques, in O. Fillieule, L. Mathieu, & C. Péchu, *Dictionnaire des mouvements sociaux* (pp. 530-540). Presses de Sciences Po.

Freundenburg, W.R., & Pastor, S.K. (1992). Nimbys and Lulus: Stalking the syndromes. *Journal of Social Issues*, 48(4), 39-61.

Gibson, R., & Cantijoch, M. (2013). Conceptualizing and measuring participation in the age of the Internet: Is online political engagement really different to offline? *The Journal of Politics*, 75(3), 701-716.

Granovetter, M. (1983). The strength of weak ties: A network theory revisited. *Sociological Theory*, 1, 201-233.

Granjon, F. (2001). *L'Internet militant: Mouvement social et usages des réseaux télématiques*. Apogée.

Greffet, F. (2012). Le Web dans la recherche en science politique: Nouveaux terrains, nouveaux enjeux. *Revue de la BNF*, 40, 78-83.

Halpin, D., Vromen, A., Vaughan, M., & Raissi, M. (2018). Online petitioning and politics: The development of change.org in Australia. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 53(4), 428-445.

Huré, L. (2017). Change.org, autorités et processus d'autorisation. *Communication & Langages*, 192, 83-102.

Jobert, A. (1998). L'Aménagement en politique ou ce que le syndrome NIMBY nous dit de l'intérêt général. *Politix*, 42, 67-92.

Karpf, D.A. (2010). Online political mobilisation from the advocacy group's perspective: Looking beyond clicktivism. *Policy and Internet*, 2(4), 7-41.

Lampoltshammer, T.J., Zhu, Q., & Parycek, P. (2019). Affective effect: Issue engagement on a youth E-participation platform. *JeDEM - Journal of EDemocracy and Open Government*, 11(1), 37-58, <http://www.jedem.org>.

Lasserre, F. (2000). Les Hommes qui voulaient être rois: Principautés et nations sur Internet. *Cybergeo: European Journal of Geography*. <http://cybergeo.revues.org/4397>. <https://doi.org/10.4000/cybergeo.4397>.

Lardeux L. (2023a), Les jeunes activistes dans le(s) mouvement(s) climat, INJEP Notes & Rapport/Rapport d'étude.

Lardeux L. (2023b), L'éco-anxiété vue par les jeunes activistes du mouvement climat, INJEP Analyses & synthèses.

Léonard, T., (2015, March). Analyse d'un corpus de pétitions: L'Exemple des pétitions sur l'unité de la Belgique sur le site lapetition.be [Unpublished report].

Marcus, G. E. (2008). *Le Citoyen sentimental: Emotions et politique en démocratie*. Presses de sciences Po.

Margolis, M., & Resnick, D. (2000). *Politics as usual: The cyberspace 'Revolution'*. Sage.

Monnoyer-Smith, L. (2011). La Participation en ligne, révélateur d'une évolution des pratiques politiques? *Participations*, 1, 156-185.

Monnoyer-Smith, L., & Wojcik, S. (2012). Technology and the quality of public deliberation: A comparison between on and offline participation. *International Journal of Electronic Governance*, 5(1), 24-49.

Monnoyer-Smith, L., & Wojcik S. (2014). La Participation politique en ligne: Vers un renouvellement des problématiques? *Participations*, 8, 5-29.

Morozov, E. (2011). *The net delusion: The dark side of Internet freedom*. Penguin.

Neveu, E. (2011). *Sociologie des mouvements sociaux*. La Découverte.

Stoker, G., & Evans, M. (Eds.). (2016). *Evidence-based policy making in the social sciences: Methods that matter*. Policy Press.

Paye, O., Contamin, J.G, Pilet, J.B., et al. (2017, 3-4 April). Le Pétitionnement en ligne, nouvelle modalité d'action citoyenne: Le Cas des pétitions sur le survol aérien de Bruxelles sur le site lapetition.be: Du syndrome NIMBY à l'effet foot in the door [Paper presentation]. 7ème Congrès de l'ABSP, 'l'Etat face à ses transformations', Mons.

Pilet, J.-B. et al. (2019). Power users in online democracy: Their origins and impact. *Information, Communication and Society*, 23(13), 1838-1853. DOI: 10.80/1369118X.2019.1621920.

Pariser, E. (2011). *The filter bubble: What the Internet is hiding from you*. Penguin.

Paveau, M.-A. (2017). *L'Analyse du discours numérique*. Hermann.

Puschmann, C., Bastos, M. T., & Schmidt, J.-H. (2017). Birds of a feather petition together? Characterizing e-petitioning through the lens of platform data. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(2), 203–220.

Rosanvallon, P. (2006). *La Contre-démocratie: l'Âge de la défiance*. Seuil.

Rosanvallon, P. (2008). *La Légitimité démocratique*. Seuil.

Schlozman, K.L. et al. (2010). Weapon of the strong? Participatory inequality and the Internet. *Perspectives on Politics*, 8, 487–509.

Schulman, S. (2009). The case against mass E-mails: Perverse incentives and low quality public participation in US Federal rulemaking. *Policy and Internet* 1(1), 23–53.

Scott, A., John, P., Margetts, H., & Yasseri, T. (2014). Investigating political participation and social information using big data and a natural experiment [Paper presentation]. Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association.

Setyoko, Paulus & Wahyuningrat, Wahyuningrat & Kurniasih, Denok. (2023). Factors of Successful E-Petitions in Policy Making Process: A Scoping Review. *Policy & Governance Review*. 7. 72. 10.30589/pgr.v7i1.650.

Theocharis, Y., & van Deth, J.W. (2018). The continuous expansion of citizen participation: A new taxonomy. *European Political Science Review*, 10(1), 139–163.

Tilly, C. (1984). Les Origines du répertoire d'action collective contemporaine en France et en Grande-Bretagne. *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'Histoire*, 4, 89–108. <http://doi.org/10.3406/xxs.1984.1719>.

Tilly, C. (1986). *La France conteste*. Fayard.

Tufekci, Z., & Freelon, D. (2013). Introduction to the special issue on New Media and Social Unrest. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(7), 843–847.

Vedel, T. (2017). *L'Internet et la démocratie: Une Liaison difficile*. In P. Perrineau et al. (Eds.), *La démocratie de l'entre-soi* (pp. 73–88). Presses de sciences Po.

Wright, S. (2016). E-petitions. In S. Coleman & D. Freelon (Eds.), *Handbook of digital politics* (pp. 136–150), Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

Vissers, S., & Stolle, D. (2014). The Internet and new modes of political participation: Online versus offline participation. *Information, Communication & Society*, 17(8), 937–955.

Wolbring, G., & Gill, S. (2023) Potential Impact of Environmental Activism: A Survey and a Scoping Review. *Sustainability*, 15, 2962.

Yasseri, T., Scott, A., & Margetts, H. (2017). Rapid rise and decay in petition signing. *EPJ Data Sci*, 6(20).

About the Authors

Martine Legris

Dr Martine Legris (f) is a researcher at the Lille University, France (Center for European Research on Administration, Politics and Society). She holds a PhD from the University of Paris Dauphine in Sociology and is a contemporary historian of the University Paris 1 Pantheon Sorbonne. Dr Martine Legris is an internationally well-known scholar in sociology. She is published in SHS and active across the fields of participatory democracy, participatory sciences industrial democracy and critical research.

She has extensive experience in coordinating research projects at a national and international level. She coordinated several research projects on participatory democracy and participatory action research. She is now contributing to a research project on energy transitions and citizens' initiatives. She is also part of the European SHIFT project.

She is a member of the scientific board of the scientific group CNRS "National Research Group on Democracy and Participation" (<http://www.participation-et-democratie.fr/en>) in Paris. The group focuses on citizens' contribution, beyond their usual involvement in the institutional political life, to choices about society - climate change, social equality, redistribution and solidarity, public engagement with science, civil rights etc. She is a reviewer in several reviews.

Régis Matuszewicz

Régis Matuszewicz is a lecturer in political science at the University of Reims, France and a member of the Center for European Research on Administration, Politics and Society (CE-RAPS UMR 8026) in Lille. Dr Régis Matuszewicz has been involved with several national and international research projects. His main research interests are territory and democracy. He is developing the following thematics: political and trade union electoral implantation, new forms of political participation, democratic transition in Central and Eastern Europe, and geopolitics of energy. His expertise also includes discourse analysis. He has published a study of French parliamentary debates on the health pass and the Covid pass (2023). He intends to focus on this approach within the framework of a four-year national research contract (October 2021- September 2025) on reindustrialisation.