
















Contentious Branding

A topological perspective on the Connective vs. Collective dilemma?

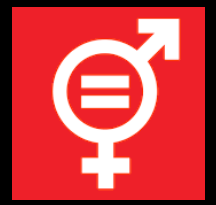
ANSOC meeting

Davide Beraldo
DATACTIVE
Univ. of Amsterdam













What is ‘one’ social movement?

- Social movements are **multiplicities** (“more than one, less than many”)
- Social movements are **differentiated** into **recognizable** entities

 Contentious branding as *the production of the* ***conditions of recognizability*** *of social movements*

~ Material-semiotic process of differentiation of multiplicities (see also DeLanda 2002, Deleuze and Guattari 1980, Mol 2002)

Contentious branding: what for?

Empirical aim:
- Allows to make sense of contemporary **‘weird’ phenomena**

Epistemological aim:
- Assists **non-essentialist** conceptualization of social movements

Methodological aim:
- Exploits **research affordances** of digital media in era of datafication

Shift of focus

- From studying **properties** of ‘one social movement’ to studying diverse **appropriation** of contentious brands

- branding **for contention** (set of signifiers communicating struggles)

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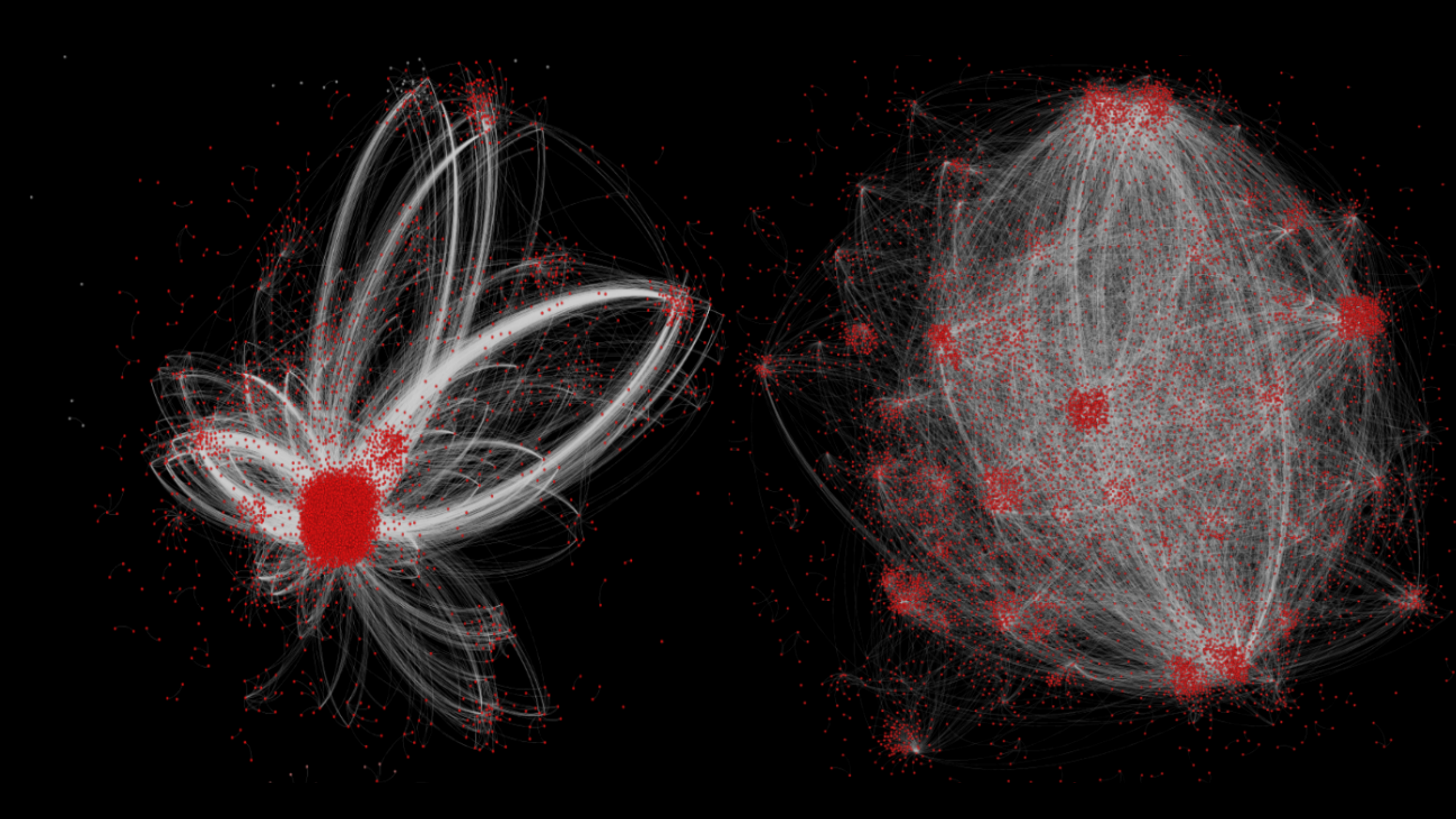
- **contention over** branding (“you are not really Anonymous / communist / feminist /…”)

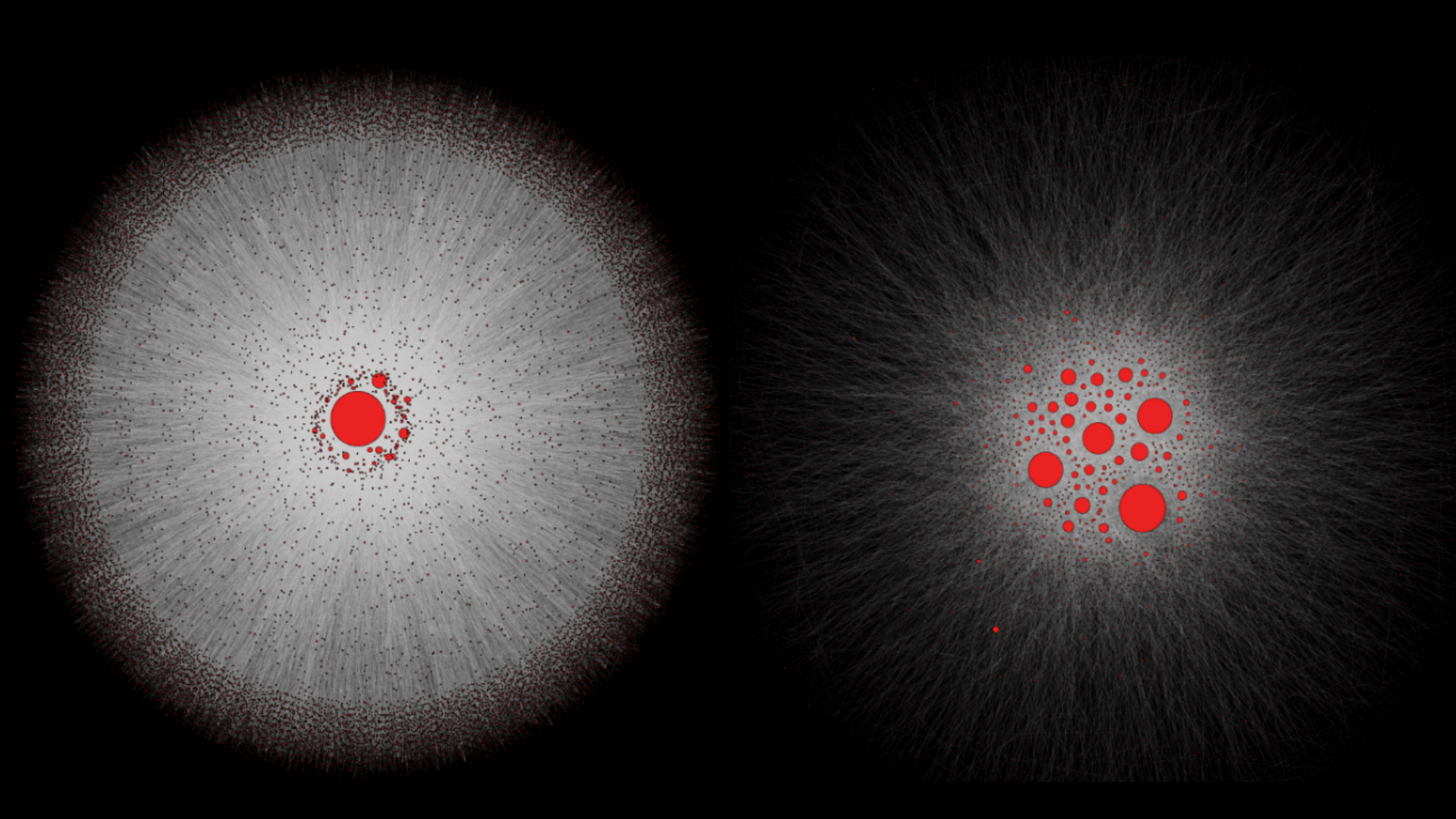
→ Focus on role of **symbols** (labels, icons, slogans) in expressing social movements

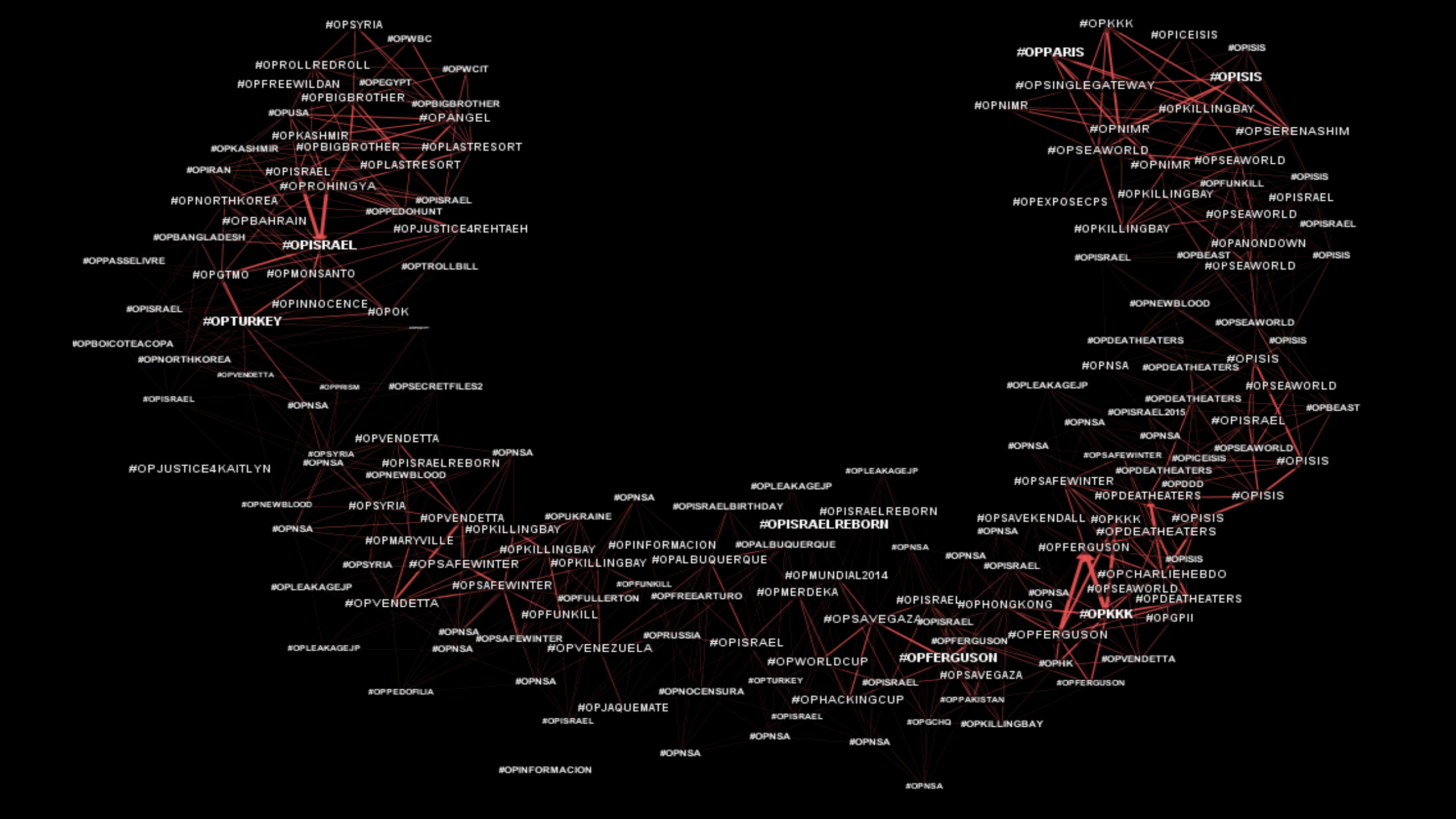
→ Beyond **authenticity / inauthenticity** of appropriation of symbols

Anonymous…who?


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#OPISRAEL
#OPISIS
#OPFERGUSON
#OPISRAELREBORN
#OPNSA
#OPJUSTICE4KAITLYN
#OPINNOCENCE
#OPVENEZUELA
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#OPNIMR
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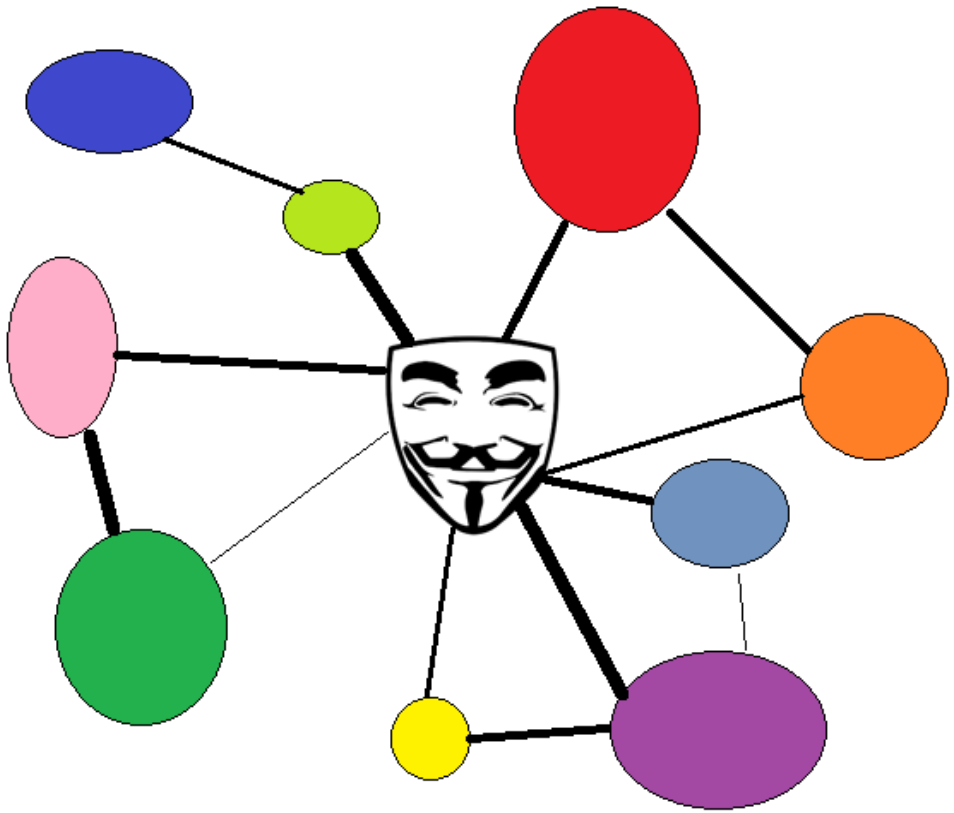
The ‘packaging’ of social movements

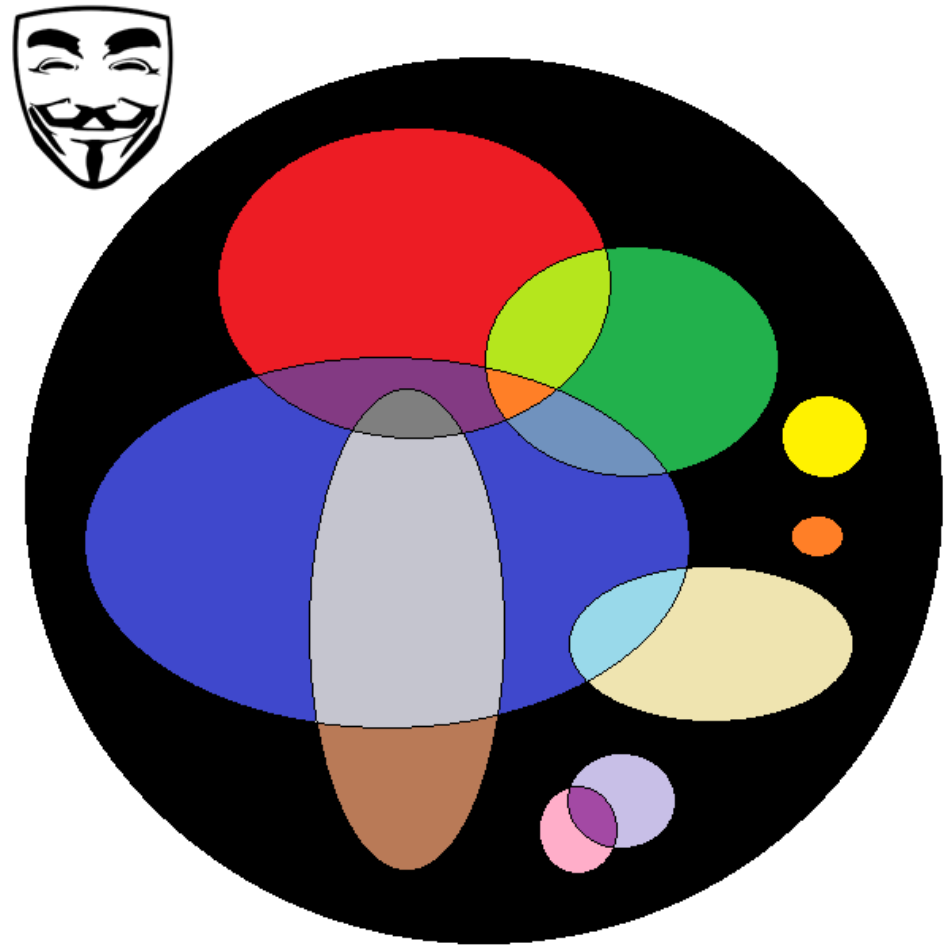
- The **content** is incoherent / shifting, but the **form** is uniform / stable

- Anonymous is ‘**many**’ (movements), yet Anonymous are ‘**one**’ (brand)



Contentious Brands: a topological perspective





Connecting and Collecting

Thorny problem:
• emergence of **connective** action (Bennett and Segerberg 2012)
vs.
• persistence of **collective** identity (Gerbaudo and Treré 2015)

Topological perspective:
• contentious brand **connects *between*** diverse mobilizations
vs.
• diverse mobilizations **collected *under*** contentious brand