

Module 4 Video 3: Performing network analysis using data from social networks

[00:00:01] In a previous video, we saw an example of a Twitter network analysis for Bellincat.

[00:00:07] And for many digital investigations, it can be very, very useful to analyze the connections between people involved in the discussions that are taking place on social networks. And the good thing is it really does not have to be complicating to conduct such an analysis. And in this video, you will learn how you can do your own social network analysis with Twitter data. And by the end of the next video, you will have created a natural craft like this. And you will also know how to read what the graph tells you.

[00:00:43] So let's start. For our analysis we will use the free tool Netlytic, which allows you to collect and visualize tweets. It has its limitations regarding the size of the datasets in the absence of advanced features. But it is a great starting point and Netlytic allows you to import thousand tweets from the last seven days. Just be aware that you cannot get tweets older than that, right?

[00:01:12] So the next step is to go to the Netlytic website and to create a free account there. You have to provide an email address and the password for this. And once you have an account, you will need a Twitter data set that you want to analyze. By Twitter data set I mean, a list of tweets about a specific topic that you want to visualize in a graph. A network analysis is really, really useful to find out who's in the center of a discussion on social networks and how accounts in a specific data set are connected to each other.

[00:01:53] I decided to have a look at tweets about a protest in August 2020 against the German government's Covid-19 measures. The role of the police during this protest was widely discussed in Germany. So one reason for this was that some far right protesters went up the stairs of the Reichsflaggen, which is the seat of the German parliament, and the building was only protected by three police officers at the time. And using network analysis, I wanted to find out whether the police also played a central role in discussions about the protest on Twitter. And to collect a rather random data set about the protests in Berlin. I decided to collect tweets that included hashtags which were widely used on Twitter during the protests. So like this one.

[00:02:51] Or this one.

[00:02:54] And the first step, if you want to collect a Twitter data set using Netlytic, is to define a Twitter search query. In my case, the search query looked like this. So I've wanted tweets that contained at least one of these hashtags, but you can also use much more complex search queries by using Twitter's advanced search and by defining your search parameters there.

[00:03:24] I know that you already had a look at advanced Twitter search options and you can use all those things too when collecting your Netlytic data set. For example, you can search for tweets that contain all of those words here. Berlin. Corona. You can also define that I want tweets with any of these words here, like Demonstration Protest. And I can also say, okay, I only want to collect tweets in German. I collect the language and then I click on Search. And once you are on the results page, just copy whatever comes up here. Right. So we need this search query.

[00:04:16] So in the next step, you need to connect your Twitter account to an Netlytic, and for this you click on my account. And then you see a section called Twitter account. And here you just follow the instructions. Right. And once this is done, you can click on new data set. And here you can give a name to your data sets of you stay in the category Twitter and you can choose a name for your data set. I now call it Berlin Protest. And then you have to paste your Twitter search query here. So whatever you copied from the results page on Twitter, put it here. It can look like this. In my case, it was much simpler because I remember I only wanted to collect tweets that contained specific hashtags. So my search query looked like that. I copy it in here and then here I have to click on import. If you haven't yet used all your datasets, I already used all of them. Then you can click on imports here and all you have to do now is to wait. And the data set is now imported to your account.

[00:05:40] It may take a while. So perhaps you have to wait a little bit. And once this is done, you can find your data set under My Datasets. And here you'll find it listed and you can click on one of the datasets and you'll get a preview of the first hundred tweets.

[00:06:00] And yeah, in the next video, you will learn how to transform your Twitter dataset into a network graph and to analyze the connections between the tweets in the dataset that you just collected.