



SOCIAL MEDIA AND CLIMATE

Before the Bird Became Extinct: Reflections on Social Media and Eco-Activism

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18 December 2025 – 17.00-18.30

ABSTRACT

The webinar will be based on a critical and partly autobiographical paper in which I reflect on my experience running Twitter for Extinction Rebellion UK (XR). The paper has two main sections. The first half is more pragmatic, discussing protest actions and how to best amplify those actions on social media. I examine how XR used disruptive, non-violent action to create controversial spectacles designed for social media, a tactic later developed further by groups such as *Just Stop Oil*. I argue that while these tactics were initially effective in amplifying the impact of actions, attracting media attention, and refocusing that attention on the climate crisis, they became less effective as Twitter (particularly under Elon Musk's ownership) began to deteriorate into a platform increasingly characterised by spectacle and disinformation.

In the second part, I develop a more theoretical argument, drawing on Cory Doctorow's concept of 'enshittification' and Rem Koolhaas' notion of 'junkspace' to draw an analogy between the degradation of the Internet and the destruction of the natural world—both transformed from spaces of value into forms of 'junkspace.' I conclude that, under Musk, Twitter has become increasingly inhospitable to progressive social movements and that such platforms may ultimately hinder rather than help efforts toward social and environmental justice.

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