Anti-Elon activist smoothie: A street ethnography of the #TeslaTakedown protests in London

Abstract

In this article, I deconstruct the political aesthetics (Werbner, Webb & Spellman-Poot, 2014) of the Tesla Takedown campaign in the UK. Armed with make-shift signs that read slogans such as "HONK IF YOU HATE ELON" and "SAY NO TO FACISM", some of the protestors donned absurd alien costumes, whilst others waved flags—the Ukrainian flag being most prominent. What emerges from the ethnographic description is that the activists are paradoxically *not* only concerned about the specific object of the protests, the electric car company Tesla. Rather, the protests were more about the real and imagined villainy of Elon Musk. My empirical analysis is based on participant observation at three London Tesla Takedowns protests, plus semi-structured interviews with several key activists afterwards. I argue that the "dialectical icon" (Bittner, 2023, p. 257) of Elon Musk has brought together different political grievances and given way to broader contestation of contemporary social issues creating a symbolic "smoothie" of resistance. (Klein, 2020) I suggest that three political grievances around 1) toxic technopolitics, 2) climate accelerationism and 3) flagrant misogyny have become synonymous with Musk's celebrity persona and his extraordinary accumulation of wealth and power. Towards the conclusion, I question whether fear and loathing around AI proliferation is what underlies the Tesla Takedown campaign. Because activists, like scholars, can get bogged down in technical-*cum*-philosophical debates about "what is AI? (Bathaee 2017; Carabantes 2020; Zednik 2021), I contend that AI manifests as an ethnographic subject through the political aesthetics at the point of its resistance.

Keywords

Bluesky, Elon Musk, ethnography, political aesthetics, social movements

Introduction

At around 11am on Saturday, 24th April 2025 a small group of protestors gathered outside of the Tesla showroom on the main dual-carriage way heading west out of London, through the outer suburbs of the Borough of Ealing. The "Tesla Takedown" campaigners are tired of Elon Musk's visible rise to authoritarianism that has seen the world's richest man seated inside President Trump's Administration in the newly formed Department of Government Efficacy (DOGE). Armed with make-shift signs and placards that read slogans such as "HONK IF YOU HATE ELON" and "SAY NO TO FACISM" the group of fifteen protestors traverse the side of the busy road, goading passing drivers into beeping their horns. Some of the protestors donned absurd alien costumes (see image 2), whilst others waved flags—the Ukrainian flag being most prominent (see image 1). These London protests, occurring weekly from February 2025 until October, sprouted into splinter groups in 13 other towns across the UK, from Glasgow in Scotland to Exeter in the far south-western corner of the British Isles.

In this article, I investigate the diverse people, politics and practices behind the Tesla Takedown campaign in the UK, asking who are the people taking on the world's richest man in the world? I first contextualise the rise of Elon Musk in the wider political landscape and then explore the manifold reasons of the campaign by examining the political aesthetics of the protests. I argue that dislike for Musk materializes into a symbolic smoothie to which different political grievances can be attached. While the symbolic dimension of the protests has been previously studied in relation to the social movements (Webb et al, 2014), I also rely on literature around celebrity (Archer & Sie, 2023) and memetic ecologies (Baun & Bristow, 2021).

The empirical analysis is based on participant observation at three London Tesla Takedowns protests including conversations on the ground, analysis of their social media presence, plus separate semi-structured interviews with several key activists afterwards. What emerges from the ethnography is that the activists are paradoxically *not* only concerned about the specific object of the protests—the electric car company Tesla. Rather, it is clear from the accounts that the protests were much more about the real and imagined villainy of Elon Musk. I argue that the "dialectical icon" (Bittner, 2023, p. 257) of Elon Musk has brought together different political grievances and gave way to broader contestation of contemporary social issues creating a symbolic smoothie of resistance. But why? What is so egregious about Elon Musk for his car company to become the object of such a specific resistance movement. By deconstructing the political aesthetics of the protests, I suggest that three political grievances around 1) toxic technopolitics, 2) climate accelerationism and 3) flagrant misogyny have become synonymous with Musk's celebrity persona and his extraordinary accumulation of wealth and power.



Image 1: Ukrainian flags were a persistent presence at the protests. There were no Palestinian flags.

The Tesla Takedown campaign emerged on Bluesky, a social media platform founded by Jack Dorsey as an open-source, decentralised alternative to Twitter (Balduf et al, 2024). Since being infamously acquired by Elon Musk, X (as Twitter is now rebranded), has undergone a brazen process of enshitification (Doctorow, 2025), becoming increasingly trashy, automated and authoritative. As such, user migrations to Bluesky have, in themselves, been an act of political resistance against Elon Musk and his brand of digital capitalism. I conceive of the Tesla Takedown campaign, devised on Bluesky, as not only a protest against a highly successful electric car company but a programmatic response against Musk's heavy-handed foray into news and media via X, and his other prominent business pursuit: satellite development and space exploration by his technology company SpaceX. When considered together, Elon Musk's three most predominant companies are unified by controversial technological innovation around artificial intelligence (AI). One of Tesla's widely publicised goals is to achieve fully autonomous driving cars via advancements in AI spatial awareness (despite numerous accidents in testing and signs that this technology is untenable in live situations). The implementation of the large language model, Grok, to X has produced various transgressions including praising Nazism and reproducing pornographic images of female celebrities. Finally, SpaceX's ambitions to 'colonise' Mars—in the words of Greg Brockman, Open AI's President testified (Reuters, 2026)—is premised on the development of AI-automated robotics for interplanetary exploration and mining. Towards the conclusion, therefore, I question whether Elon Musk's combination of AI-enabled business pursuits, and unrealised fear and loathing around AI proliferation more broadly, is what underlies the Tesla Takedown campaign.

The Tesla Takedown campaign

Bluesky Origin Story

Originating in the USA in early February 2025, The Tesla Takedown campaign first on social media platform, Bluesky. Joan Donovan, a sociology professor and disinformation researcher at Boston University, is credited with initiating the first protest by deploying the #TeslaTakeover hashtag in a Bluesky post urging his followers to "bang some pots and pans" outside Tesla dealerships to protest Elon Musk's involvement in DOGE. DOGE was a high-profile governmental initiative led by Elon Musk to overhaul the U.S. federal government, following his public and financial support for Donald Trump's re-election campaign. DOGE had a sweeping mandate to dismantle government, slash regulations, cut expenditures, and restructure federal agencies. For all its serious consequences, DOGE maintained an absurdist, boys-club aurora. Beginning from the name-down—the acronym originates from an internet meme of a Shiba Inu dog and refers to Dogecoin, a cryptocurrency that Musk had previously promoted—DOGE maintained an unserious air, potentially making it all the more dangerous. It is unsurprising, then, that Joan Donovan's #TeslaTakeover post went viral on Bluesky, galvanizing widespread support from journalists, academics, and democrats more broadly, and quickly morphed into what was to become the official #TeslaTakedown campaign.

By February 25th, *The Verge* reported that what "started with a smattering of demonstrations outside Tesla showrooms in places like Maine, Massachusetts, New York, California, and Colorado" exploded to protests in over 60 locations (Hawkins, 2025). The power of hashtags to serve as "indexing system" (Bonilla & Rosa, 2014, p. 6) that allows users to filter noise and realign busy social media feeds into one topic of salient interest was apparent as the US origins of the campaign sprouted to the UK within a few weeks, morphing into equivalent

protests there. The UK arm of the campaign began following discussions between then-strangers Maddy and Frank around content on the first Tesla Takedown protest in the US on Bluesky. Maddy is a forty-something year old Londoner, an Oxford graduate, and has had a successful career as a journalist. Frank is a laidback Californian, with a long career in software development who remembers the optimism of the early internet in the 1990s.

Founded by Twitter visionary, Jack Dorsey, Bluesky began life as an idea in 2019. In order for Dorsey to build the world's most trusted platform for news and information, he had to accept financialization, turning Twitter into a publicly traded company. From within Twitter, in 2021, Dorsey initiated the development of a separate, rival platform free from constraints of financialization. Dorsey craved "a form of social media that could evade capture or control altogether, be it by advertisers, Wall Street raiders, politicians or shareholders." (Conger & Mac, 2024, 91). He named the side hustle, Bluesky—a vague metaphor referring to the open space Twitter's iconic bird branding could fly (escape) into. Soon after, Twitter employee and expert coder Jay Graber convinced Dorsey to sign off Bluesky as an independent company with her in charge.

When Maddy first saw the US Tesla Takedown campaign on Bluesky she thought that a consumer boycott to takedown Tesla was a good idea. She reckoned that many people "only go on protests for protesting's' sake" but as a "literally minded person" this was "actually doable". Within two weeks of first chatting on Bluesky, Maddy and Frank had set up a video call and were organising their first IRL protest outside of Tesla garage in London's western suburb of White City. The first protest was just the two of them, and after doing some chanting for no more than 15 minutes they were quickly moved along by security. Maddy was inexperienced in protests and anxious about the legality of their presence on private property. After learning that

they were committing a trespassing felony by protesting on Tesla property, going forward they would move to the public roadside spot outside the Tesla showroom in Hanger Lane.

Melucci argued that social movements oscillate between phases of latency and visibility (Melucci 1996, 174), but because "collective action is not a fact but a process" (Melucci 1989), the invisible and unglamorous work is as integral as the public-facing work that makes movements evident and striking. According to Melucci, scholarship should equally focus on the invisible or unglamorous sides of activism and resist its tendency for the "myopia of the visible" because social movements would not be tenable without the essential behind-the-scenes latency work (Melucci 1989, 44). Ferrari (2022) argues that during mutual aid activism prevalent through the COVID:19 pandemic, latency and visibility work collided. Rather than reinforce or supplement one another, visibility and latency work obscured and undermined their impact as crisis conditions pushed collective identity processes down in importance, whilst backstage activities were elevated. My observation is that activism on and through social media has an ambivalent relationship to the latency/visibility binary. The social media work of the Tesla Takedown campaign is latency work insofar as it is unglamorous and administrative, but it also has the ambition of achieving visibility. Evidently, the social media latency work of the US Tesla Takedown campaign on Bluesky achieved great visibility in the UK, inspiring Maddy and Frank to activate there.

Despite this unsettling of the roles of latency and visibility work in contemporary social movements, Frank reproduced the binary in his description of how he and Maddy ran the campaign. As the two founding members of the UK Tesla Takedown campaign, Maddy would act as the public "mouthpiece", whilst he would be the behind the scenes "brainchild". Frank coded a visually impressive website and dealt with the administrative and legal goings-on, whilst

Maddy's journalistic and PR skills would make the compelling case as to why people should join them at weekly protests. In a matter of weeks, the London protests garnered public support and a disproportionate amount of media attention. The protests sprouted organically into various cities across the UK, including major cities such as Bristol, Manchester and Glasgow. The *I*, *Forbes* and *The Guardian* all covered the building social movement, and the popular right-wing YouTube influencer, Wesley Winter, attended a protest to produce a vlog.

The ambition of the UK Tesla Takedown campaign was hardly modest. They believed that by specifically attacking Tesla they can adversely affect Musk's ability to operate because Musk's access to financial capital is contingent on Tesla share prices. At the end of 2024, Tesla's share price was around $400—its highest ever figure seemingly coinciding with Musk's appointment into the White House. However, through the first half of 2025, when the Tesla Takedown campaign in the UK and US was at their apex, Tesla stock went into steady decline, downturning 36%. We cannot be certain what were the levers for the crash, but the protests and viral campaigns plus Musk's own public gaffs, including his shocking Nazi salute, seemed to be derailing the value of his prized electric-car corporation. As the world's richest man was losing grip on the cash-cow, Tesla, Maddy mused, "In an ideal world Tesla will be sold off for parts and Musk steps down as CEO."

Protesting Elon Musk

Musk's purchase of Twitter has spelled the end of a social media era defined by a "culture of connectivity" (Van Dijck, 2013) into a landscape of fragmented "polarised political polities" (Tkacz and Gehl, 2025). What does the emergence of the Tesla Takedown tell us about resistance against wealth and power? In the last 5 years, not only has Elon Musk become the richest person in history, but he has also become one of the most influential and recognizable

celebrities on the planet. Philosophers have explored the potential for celebrities to function as role models and moral exemplars (Archer & Sie, 2023), and via mish-mash of highly successful technological innovations and corporate acquisitions, near-constant presence on his beloved X (previously Twitter), and a spate of public controversies, Elon Musk not only dominates global news cycles but symbols a bifurcation of societal values. Musk is a "dialectical icon" (Bittner, 2023)—a public figure who features in contentious and polarising political discourse—enabling fans and antifans to negotiate political values through a parasocial relationship (boyd, 2026).

For over a decade he has positioned himself in the public arena with an average of 30-100 tweets a day (Factually, 2026), generating thousands of comments and adjacent commentaries, accruing "a rather uncanny divine status" (MacFarland Taylor, 2024, p. 239). Given his ubiquitous postings on Twitter/X, perhaps more than any celebrity, Musk is both the architect and spectator of his own reputation (Fine, 1996). His role in the modern world—and humanity's future—has become so important, the term Muskian has been used to describe "a constellation of interlinked myths, narratives, and public performances that both celebrate and contest Musk's role in shaping the future" (Madsen, 2025). Musk's fans, known via a seemingly endless iteration of monikers devoted to his namesake—Musketeers, Muskrats, Muskovites, MuskBros, the Musk Meme Militia et al—organize across social media as defenders against Musk's scandalous claims and behaviour. These fans produce videos, blogs, tributes, shrines and memes that eulogise Musk's achievements whilst eviscerating critics and naysayers. Indeed, one of Musk's most captivating behaviours for fans is how he interacts with normies, remixing memes and making troll-like comments in the spirit of fringe internet subcultures. In China, fan obsession culminated in a deepfake doppelganger of Elon Musk known as Yilong Ma. Originating on Chinese social media platforms Douyin, Yilong Ma has since traversed to

platforms beyond The Great Firewall, even gathering attention on X from Elon Musk himself. As such, not only is Elon refining what constitutes celebrity but he is inspiring a new modularity of algorithmic celebrity or “synthetic impersonator" (de Seta, 2026).



Image 2: Whilst officially campaigning against Tesla, some protestors specifically targeted Musk’s Mars obsession.

Yet, despite his omnipresent public persona, aided and abetted by his legions of fans, Musk’s hero like status has gradually and simultaneously transcended to pantomime villain for the internet age (McLaughlin et al, 2022). Celebrity is a powerful but unstable status, and Musk is discovering that his “algorithmic charisma—a form of authority sustained not only by follower belief but by cycles of visibility, virality, and amplification within digital platforms” (Madsen, 2025, p. 10) is highly contingent and volatile. For example, Elon’s success building Tesla and revolutionizing electric car ownership has helped accrue him extraordinary wealth and, in many liberals eyes, respect, but his donor support to Donald Trump’s second presidential campaign has generated an emerging internet subculture of “anti-fans” (Gray, 2003). Perhaps it is the stark contradiction of Elon's politics—one moment he is dramatically reducing carbon emissions with

innovative technology, the next he is supporting an administration whose electoral campaign is premised on support for the fossil fuel industry and the denial and defamation of climate change inquiry, that makes him such a vitriolic target for protest. Thus, whilst invaluable research has looked at Musk's cult-like appeal and religious fan-following (Ante, 2023; Madsen, 2025; MacFarland Taylor, 2024), there has been less consideration for the people who are actively and visibly opposing Musk. Previously MacFarland Taylor (2024) has deftly unpacked the fantastical narratives spun by Elon and reinforced by his fans to qualify space colonization as a logical next step to save humanity from certain catastrophe. Whilst it is no doubt important to understand how Elon cultivates his messianic status, I am more interested to ask, who are the people actively resisting Musk's existential vision for human life on Earth?



Image 3: Musk as a Nazi is probably the most popular political aesthetic. The billboard (right) was organised by Overthrow Musk (a separate anti-Elon campaign)

By the second half of 2025, Musk's Tesla stock had steadily recovered. This upswing may have coincided with his public spat with President Trump in June 2025 when Musk stepped down from DOGE and the two strongmen exchanged insults on social media. If people in the

UK dislike Elon Musk, many more despise Donald Trump, and Musk's unsubtle allegations that the President was implicated in the Geoffrey Epstein files may have won him some sympathisers. By October 2025, Maddy, who had previously been so committed and optimistic about the potential of the Tesla Takedown campaign, was resigned to defeat. She stepped down from leading the campaign as the London weekly protests fizzled out to once a month and the splinter groups in other cities ground to a halt. In terms of achieving their ambitious goals of crashing the Tesla stock and forcing Musk to sell the business, the campaign was a failure. But evaluating the goals and achievements of protest action is a narrow view of political resistance. As Sheehan Moore (2013, 6) writes:

> "When we try to understand only the causes and intended effects of protest, we obscure their material nature and erase the physical bodies that enter—out of perceived necessity—into spaces that are forbidden to them. What would it mean to treat forms of protest like occupations not only as declarative—i.e., as political statements—but also as embodied and spatial practice?"

The Political Aesthetics of Protest

Not assessing the apparatus of political protest from a vantage point of success/failure alleviates the need to ascribe merit to the outcomes of action and instead focus on the embodied practice of *how* people resist hegemonic forces beyond normative values of *why*. Having attended three of the weekly protests in London in Spring 2025, the bodies' present was diverse in unexpected ways. Alongside Maddy and Frank, was George, a Brit, and his Brazilian partner Rafi, both of whom were late-career academics. Olga was a Ukrainian who had been living in London since 2002, Wendy was from Glasgow and had links to protest groups since the 2016 anti-Trump protests, and Gwyneth was a American mum of three who had come up to London

from Brighton for the weekend to get involved. Others included Phillip, a EU flag-waving Brit nearing retirement and Meryl, an older American who remembers protesting the Vietnam war. Whilst the majority of the protestors were ranging from 40 to 75 years old there were a handful of young people. Lilly was a student at a London university studying Law with a sizable following on Bluesky; Maria was a trans woman who was also studying locally in London, and a second, Lilly, was English, but had a Ukrainian flag painted on her cheek.

The diverse political aesthetics of people on the ground at the Tesla Takedown protests embodies resistance to hegemonic power. Werbner, Webb & Spellman-Poots (2014, p. 8) propose an emergent anthropology of protest movements that sees all politics as "as aesthetic, visualised through media, and expressed in song, humour, poetry and bodily participation". As the findings sections demonstrate, I observe that the political aesthetics witnessed at the weekly London protests signal to the broader social issues that Musk is implemented in, but also reveal the protestors' highly personal, and often singular, reasons for opposing the richest man in the world. For example, Olga was wearing a homemade T-shirt that read "Send Elon Musk to Mars (one way)". Her motivation for opposing Musk was based on his tweets on the Russian Ukrainian war and the power he holds over the beleaguered nation by hosting internet connectivity to Ukraine via his Starlink satellites. Differently, Maria had a specific contempt for Musk due to the negligence and public shaming of his own daughter, also a trans woman. Indeed, most of the people who identify as female at the protests had a specific dislike for Musk due to his misogynistic relationship with his female partners.



Image 4 & 5: Do these wacky protestors' costumes relate to climate change, encourage virality, or protect protestors against surveillance technologies?

Through the Tesla Takedown campaigns on both sides of the Atlantic, protestors sought to draw attention to egregious shortcomings of Elon Musk, from his support of fascistic administrations and obsession with space colonization to his mistreatment of his succession of ex-wives and girlfriends, and his often-estranged offspring. Despite the earnestness of the campaign to see his Tesla stock crash, the protestors, from the US to the UK, took on a comical, almost farcical approach to resisting Musk's idiosyncratic brand of digital capitalism. Dressed in outrageous costumes and pun-heavy placards that explicitly call Musk a Nazi dictator and tell him "Go Home" to Mars, the political aesthetics of the protests took on a memetic quality reminiscent of fringe-platform internet-subcultures. For example, one of the bodies on the

ground at a London protest was wearing an inflatable shark's suit, and on another day, a different protest was wearing an inflatable dinosaur outfit (see image 4). At first, I assumed this must have been a reference to climate change or wildlife protection, but I was told by the protestors that the suits were donned—and encouraged–merely because "stuff like this goes viral".

The memetic aesthetics were vividly realised through the transatlantic Tesla Takedown 2025 awards. The awards, organized by the campaign leaders, encouraged people to vote on their website for the "best placard", "best meme", "best outfit", amongst various other things. Whilst many of the contributions were nonsensical and hysterical, some were ingenious—such as the winner of the "best meme" (see image #). The greyscale cartoon meme remixed the iconic image from the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests in Beijing by replacing the Chinese army's tanks with a series of Tesla's. Another winner was Frank, a British civil servant, who had his dog accompany him on the Bristol protests. He won "best dog sign" for his punny-message "ELON CAN OLIGARGLE DEEZ NUTZ" (see image 5). Previously, Weidhasea & Wilde (2024) analysed political memes making fun of the deceased, Prince Phillip, and argued that bad taste "zombie humour" is "utilized to articulate resistance against royal authority" on Twitter. (Weidhasea & Wilde, 2024, p. 2). In the case of Tesla Takedown, absurdist humour is less "zombie" but deployed in a non-dissimilar way to build virality for social media campaigns. My feeling is that not only are we seeing a valorisation and celebration of the protest's political aesthetics, but the resistors deploy humour so centrally as it is implausible and laughable to take on the immovable power of Elon Musk.



Image 6: The Tesla Takedown celebrated the political aesthetics of their protests with an awards ceremony.

The types of bodies and the related aesthetics that oppose Elon Musk's extraordinary wealth and political dominance are both singular and emergent, whilst also multifarious and triangulated. George, a scientist himself, took umbrage with Musk's reputation as an tech-expert and "genius". George said that "Musk has not *really* invented anything", but has built his companies (Paypal, SpaceX, Tesla) via aggressive acquisitions funded by inherited wealth and ruthless management that sees him gut organisations and obfuscate worker labour rights. Interestingly, both Wendy and Gwyneth's previous activism against Donald Trump and for anti-war movements and climate change coalitions had kept them connected to emerging social movements and had got them involved in this one. By not looking at the specific reasons for

bodily participation in protests, one would miss out on the complex reasons as to why Elon Musk has become a celebrity villain who invites such intense opposition (Parham, 2024).

Methods

To examine the political aesthetics around the Tesla Takedown campaign, I conducted participation observation at three protests outside the Tesla showroom in West London between April and June 2025, and analysed the social media outputs of the campaign until its cessation in October 2025. "Participant observation centres a *long-term* intimate engagement with a *group of people* that were once *strangers* to us in order to know and experience the world through their perspectives and actions in as *holistic* a way as possible" (Shah, 2017, p. 51, their italics). At the three protests I encountered and interviewed 15 different protestors, and followed up with several of the protestors for more structured interviews in quieter settings, and met and interviewed the co-leader, Maddy, five times. Although the size of the sample is small, the interviewees represent the small-scale of the campaign and capture the main voices at the protests. From an ethical standpoint, I conducted the organizers in advance of attending the first protest and requested their permission to attend and conduct ethnographic research by helping with the latency work of the social movement by painting makeshift signs, thereby assisting in the production of the political aesthetics of the protest. For follow up interviews, I directed all participants to my personal website that explained my research goals in clear terms and requested they sign an informed consent form. As is common in scholarship, throughout the article, I replace the protestor's real names with pseudonyms and fictionalize other logical identifiers to maintain their confidentiality (Heaton, 2022). Given the surveillance capabilities of Elon Musk and emerging legislation in the UK cracking down on rights to protests, many of the protestors were

understandably wary of being identified—and specifically banned from entering the United States in the future—so ensuring they remain anonymous is of utmost importance.

While digital anthropology is concerned with people's relationship with digital technology, one of the subdisciplines core principles is that digital phenomena must be understood within their broader social and cultural contexts, therefore we reject the separation of the online and the offline worlds and recognise that digital lives are interrelated with IRL experiences (Horst & Miller, 2021). As such, one of my research goals was to be on the ground with the protestors. Whilst my research plan to participate in the protest's latency work, I also participated in the visibility work by standing on the side of the busy road and waving the signs at passing cars, receiving a mix of supportive honks and despondent shrugs. This happened because on our first meeting, Maddy, who was slightly sceptical about me—I sensed she thought I was a stooge who wanted to oust them as fanatics—handed me a sign and told me to get on the side of the road with the others. In an effort to convince her that I was a political ally—and authentic ethnographer—I complied, but on reflection I did feel slightly unsafe, primarily from the precariousness of our position on a busy road, but also from a surveillance perspective. Because it was April in London and still quite chilly, I was wearing a large wrap-around scarf and baseball cap. Instinctively, I pulled the scarf further up over my nose and my cap down to cover my face from potential identification by facial recognition technology. My enthusiasm for research, and that of my participants, got me into this position of actively participating in the culture—which gained me trust amongst a highly sensitive cohort; the hallmark that all good ethnography relies on. But it also put me in a slightly uncomfortable position. Ethnography is an evolving praxis where researchers are regularly put into positions unplanned for and the capriciousness of following how life unfolds also allows for novel findings. As I will go on to

conclude later, being thrust into the action helped me realise the dual role of face-covering costumes at the protests as not only aesthetics, but protection. By being forced to confront my own personal security and trying to safeguard my identity with my hat and scarf, participation observation enabled me *to know and experience the world through their perspectives.*

Findings: An anti-Elon activist smoothie

By deconstructing the political aesthetics of the Tesla Takedown protests, we can sketch out how opposition to Elon Musk's electric car company has become a symbol for various social values, political anxieties and moral concerns. There are three strong associations that emerge from the ethnographic encounter: toxic technopolitics, climate accelerationism and flagrant misogyny. Taken together, I argue these three discourses create an anti-Elon activist smoothie. Naomi Klein introduced the concept of the "conspiracy smoothie" to describe how seemingly separate conspiracy theories converge to become stronger and insulate one another against rebuttal (Klein, 2020). The core ingredient of the conspiracy smoothie is the "Great Reset" conspiracy, which alleges that global elites used the COVID-19 pandemic to control the world economy and society. Other conspiracy theories that had emerged before or separate to COVID, such as 5G, QAnon and the historic anti-vaccination movements, are then *blended* to support the claims of the Great Reset and galvanize its truth claims. Whilst I am not suggesting that resistance to Elon Musk is conspiratorial, I observe how the Tesla Takedown manifests as an "activism smoothie" as different ingredients are blended to forge resistance against more than Elon Musk's electric car corporation, and reinforce one another. In a social media ecosystem that similarly relies on aesthetic virality, the ingredients of toxic technopolitics, climate change accelerationism and fragrant misogyny interact to create one meta-narrative about Elon Musk's egregious relationship with AI.

Toxic Technopolitics

One of the main issues UK protesters have with Elon Musk is his conspicuous insertion into the political mainstream and his shift to toxic technopolitics. In the UK, Musk has pledged support for right-wing political party, Reform UK, publicly backing Nigel Farage, before falling out with the controversial party leader, and switching his allegiances (and financial support) to Restore Britain, a rival *further*-right political party. Additionally, Musk's algorithms on X disproportionately boost right-wing content in the UK, especially Islamophobic influences such as Tommy Robinson (Centre for the Study of Organised Hate, 2025). Maddy explains, “Musk is working beyond fascism, to something called “technofeudalism”. His goal is to get humanity off the planet and onto mars. That’s the reason he’s doing all this breeding.”

The final two points on Mars colonisation and female insemination will be explored in detail below, but Maddy’s comment on technofeudalism is worth considering here. Inspired by Greek economist Yannis Varoufakis’ book of the same name, *Technofeudalism* outlines a reality where a handful of data corporations control a vast network of digital systems known as "cloud capital". (Varoufakis, 2024) Instead of purchasing goods in a market, contemporary citizens increasingly function as "cloud serfs," dependent on platforms for work, communication, and daily life while surrendering personal data to corporations. Whilst Musk’s technological empire may operate as some iteration of technofeudalism, he seems to be moving beyond the exploitative data collection processes of Silicon Valley. The additional problem with Musk is that he is very publicly and actively moving into mainstream politics, transcending so-called cloud capital, bringing his characteristic heavy handedness into the governance and everyday politics of various nation states.

For example, in 2025, Musk was also increasingly inserting himself, via his recently acquired platform X, into British politics. On X he attacked the British Prime Minister Sir Kier Starmer for complicity in the grooming gangs' scandal and called Labour MP Jess Phillips a "rape genocide apologist". But for Ukrainian protestor, Olga, Musk's toxic technopolitics extends beyond the transatlantic anglosphere. The primary reason she is participating in the Tesla Takedown campaign and protesting against Elon Musk is because of his egregious posturing in the war in Ukraine. SpaceX's satellite systems provide high speed internet around the world, including to Ukraine. In late 2022, the Ukrainian government requested that SpaceX activate Starlink coverage all the way to the Crimean coast to facilitate a submarine drone strike against the Russian naval fleet. Musk refused to activate the network in that region, stating that doing so would make SpaceX "complicit in a major act of war" and expressing fears that it could trigger a Russian nuclear response. Around this time, Musk also hosted a ""peace plan" poll on then-called Twitter suggesting that Ukraine cede Crimea to Russia. Explaining the prevalence of Ukrainian flags at the Tesla Takedown protests, Olga said, due to Musk's ambivalent support for Russia's invasion against Ukraine, "most Ukrainians hate Musk".

Climate Accelerationism

Another theme that merged from the ethnographic encounter was Elon Musk's confusing attitude towards climate change. His relationship with climate change is ambivalent because, Musk's Tesla flagship electric car product is based on having a positive environmental impact through using renewable energy, yet his gambit for interplanetary colonialisation is premised on the idea that Earth is expendable and destined to be destroyed. The activists communicate this message directly to Tesla car owners at the showrooms in London. They convey the well-known fact that Tesla is an electric car company and has revolutionised the car industry in many

countries, normalising non-fossil fuel using car ownership and forcing car-manufacturing competitors to invest in electric cars. However, they also point to Musk's product's sizable investments and advancements in AI technologies that demand overwhelming amounts of natural resources to run. Privately, the activists also equate Musk's absurd ambition to make humanity an interplanetary species with a total disrespect for the environment and life on planet Earth.

Maddy says that this blind ambition draws on his love for Ian Banks the Scottish sci fi author whose "Culture" series explores AI, space colonialisation and a post-scarcity future. Musk has cited the books as a major inspiration for his companies, even though Banks was a staunch socialist who criticized such billionaire-driven futures. If aligning humanities ambitions to that of a sci-fi writer is not illogical enough, Maddy also adds that Musk's obsession with Mars colonization is "linked to his idea of 'effective altruism". Effective altruism is a contemporary philosophical experiment that advocates taking actions that maximally benefit human life based on statistical forecasts into the future. Maddy explains that Musk believe that "rather than solve the problem of climate change on Earth, we just need another planet" and that "if he can save 8 billion people in the future, it's perfectly fine to kill 1 billion now".

This discourse is in line with Musk's self-inscribed ambitions of being a hero with salvific ambitions to somehow save humanity from inevitable crisis. In this particular context, Musk's self-determined superhero status and his interests in sci-fi dangerously collide to create a real-world movement that believes Mars colonization is a logical and inevitable move for the well-being of humanity. But dissenters of Musk—including senior people in the scientific community—have explained that "the hurdles involved in solving any of these catastrophic challenges are astronomically easier to accomplish on Earth as compared to what it would take to fly to Mars, somehow terraform the planet to make it liveable for humans, and then to ship a

large colony of humans there" (MacFarland Taylor, 2024, p. 237). Not only is Musk's Mar's obsession based on science fiction, but it is also damaging planet Earth.

Flagrant Misogyny

As mentioned above, Maddy believes that one of the byproducts of Elon's obsession with humanity becoming an interplanetary species is his want to have as many children as possible, seemingly without consideration for the consequences and lives affected by his actions. In total, Musk has 14 publicly known children with four different women. As a "pronatalist," Musk has frequently expressed concerns over global declining birth rates and actively believes that people who can afford to, should have large families. Maddy is incredulous and says, "He's hitting people up on Twitter [sic X] and telling them he wants to impregnate them. He uses surrogates with these women".

While Musk's brazen proposals appear deplorable to the activists, his extreme wealth makes the offer appealing to some. The Tesla Takedown protestors are often bemused and outraged that women would agree to his indecent proposition because they believe he will "keep" them and their offspring long into the future. One of these mothers is Ashley St. Clair, a right-wing influencer who first met Elon Musk on Twitter in 2023 and gave birth to their son in 2024. Musk initially denied paternity and offered St Clair a NDA worth $40 million to not speak of their relationship, but St Clair refused, and Musk withdrew any financial support. The two have engaged in a long litigious battle for custody, further publicising Musk's disregard for women.

Of the fifteen activists interviewed, 10 identified as women and most if not all took serious offence with Musk's' misogynistic tendencies. This disregard for women's rights also extended to the LGTB community. At the weekly protests in London was Maria, a trans woman.

She was protesting at the Tesla Takedown campaign because of Musk's mistreatment for his transgender daughter, Vivian Jenna Wilson. Wilson, who like Maria is also in her early twenties, has accused Musk of being an absent, cruel father who harassed her for her femininity and queerness. Publicly, Musk has misgendered and "deadnamed" his daughter—the act of intentionally referring to a transgender or non-binary person by the name they used before they transitioned.

Musk's despicable fathering angered male-protestor George into action. He said "That's what's been a tipping point (for me). When his daughter transitioned, Musk said, "Woke virus killed his son".

In truth, when it comes to Musk, there are many tipping points.

Discussion: An anti-Elon activist smoothie

When considered together as an Anti-Elon Activist Smoothie, the three themes identified are not only singular concerns with Elon Musk's electric car company Tesla, but constitute ingredients of a deeper anxiety around artificial intelligence. I argue that the three political grievances aimed at Musk through the Tesla Takedown campaign reproduce the conditions of the conspiracy smoothie because the different ingredients blend together to create broader truth claims and reinforce one another. For example, Musk's toxic technopolitics and his climate accelerationism might appear like disparate entities, but they purposefully intersect around AI. As Maddy explains:

> "Musk's space colonisation plans are impossible with Net-0 in place [the environmental policy to reduce carbon emissions]. So, he is programming Grok to question climate. He is building illegal power stations to fuel Grok, which is choking people of colour."

Maddy's accusations that tie Musk's climate accelerationism to toxic technopolitics ("choking people of colour") are not unfounded. Research suggests that Grok has been coded to limit concern around climate change, saying things like, *it is not going to be the end of the world nor is it a hoax*. More than that, in 2024, Elon Musk's company xAI built an unpermitted power plant in Mississippi, USA to run a supercomputer that trains Grok. The plant's dozens of methane gas turbines emit high levels of nitrogen oxides, formaldehyde, and toxic smog into the air, disproportionately impacting Black communities in the Memphis area (Hilt, 2024). *The Guardian* reported in 2026 that the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People) filed a federal lawsuit against Musk seeking to halt the operations, implement pollution controls, and penalize the company for flouting federal environmental laws (Kerr, 2026). Yet, Musk continues to expand the power plant (Peterson & Hiller, 2026).

Musk wants to end Net-0 because the climate legislation significantly limits the building of massive AI infrastructure that requires enormous fossil fuel consumption to run its data centres. In order to discredit Net-0's viability, Musk is obscuring access to accurate information via his AI-driven platform X and actively funding and supporting right wing political parties, such as MAGA in the US and Reform and Restore in the UK, that deny, or mobilise against, climate change. Equally, the symbiotic relationship between Musk's toxic technopolitics and climate accelerationism is closely tied to his misogynist masculinity. The political parties Musk supports via algorithmic amplification and financialization promote gender normativity and the marginalization of feminist and LGBT rights (Levine, 2024). In fact, Musk has donated tens of millions of dollars to conservative parties that back anti-trans legislation. Making all these constituent elements go full circle is Musk's sci-fi inspired obsession with space exploration and making humanity an interplanetary species. Space travel requires huge advancements and

regulation in AI for automated exploration. In Musk's eyes, humanity's declining births are an existential threat to human civilisation and in order to repopulate a new planet we need to rid the "woke mind virus" that is stopping folks from making babies. In short, we need heteronormative partnerships between CIS men and women, not feminist or queer sexualities. Musk is manufacturing consent for these nonsensical ambitions by espousing mistruths that climate catastrophe is inevitable and funding political parties who advocate sexual patriarchy and financial deregulation.

Whilst I argue that underwriting the Tesla Takedown campaign is a border concern with AI, I also question, why, then, did Maddy, Frank and the Tesla Takedown campaign not set their resistance campaign against AI more broadly, or to one of Musk's other businesses, notably X? In the early stages of the campaign, Maddy reasoned that "people like single issue protests so people will get behind this". It's also likely that the campaigners targeted Tesla because it is highly visible in their communities. There are nearly 50 Tesla showrooms across the UK and majoritively in England (43), and tens of thousands of Tesla's vehicles zip around UK towns and cities, operating like a memetic reminder of Musk's egregious politics and ludicrous wealth to those who dislike him. Additionally, I inferred that because AI is a somewhat of a nebulous construct, coordinating social action against "it" is a challenging concept. When I quizzed activists on this, I found us getting bogged down in technical-*cum*-philosophical debates about "what is AI?" (Bathaee 2017; Carabantes 2020; Zednik 2021). Yet, despite AI's definitional ambiguity, the problems associated with it are becoming more pronounced, and more and more people are cognizant of AI's role in escalating unemployment and precarity, the erosion of cultural value, intensified political polarisation and the acceleration of climate change (Ho, 2025; Murgia, 2025). Thus, while AI is undeniably complex—more than a technology it is an

assemblage of ideas and infrastructures underpinned by power, ideology and discourse (McQuillan, 2022)—I contend that AI manifests as an ethnographic subject through the people and practices at the point of its resistance. In the case of the Tesla Takedown campaign, while AI is not the primary concern of the protestors, it is rendered visible by the political aesthetics of the protest movement. For example, protestors dressing up as aliens to tell Musk to "Go Home" is highly instructive. One, it lambasts the absurdity of Musk's Mars mission given its impractical reliance on AI developments which demand enormous fossil fuel consumption that will push climate change on Earth to its limit. Second, it veils the faces of protestors who are aware that facial recognition technology is being deployed to identify and criminalize protest in the UK.

Conclusion

In this article, I investigated how the 2025 Tesla Takedown protests in London attempted to take on Elon Musk's electric car corporation Tesla. Addressing this single-issue protest, I emphasized how, through a long-term ethnographic engagement at the protests, this campaign was at the same time about a clear and understandable issue, but also much more than that. I thus argued that Tesla was first and foremost a symbol that the protestors could draw upon to express their opposition to the extraordinary wealth and power of Tesla CEO Elon Musk. I also suggested the political aesthetics of the protests revealed deeper concerns about Musk's toxic technopolitics, climate acceleration and flagrant misogyny. It is in this way that mobilisation that was formally about Tesla came to be imbued with various other political anxieties, evolving to what I call an anti-Elon activist smoothie. As a result, I understand the interplay between Elon Musk and the three themes identified as relating to artificial intelligence. AI, in all its complexity, is central to the commercial ambitions of Musk's three primary business pursuits as Tesla, X and SpaceX all rely on the controversial deployment of automated systems to deliver

this product offerings. Arguably, Musk's extraordinary celebrity, wealth and power, positions him, more so than anyone else, including US President Trump or his Silicon Valley peers such as Mark Zuckerberg, as the one person who can determine the fate of humanity, for better or for worse (MacFarland Taylor, 2024). Pivotal to the power Musk wields is his ownership and understanding over technical systems governed by AI.

Despite my argument to the contrary, AI was seldom the specific reasons tabled by activists for taking to a busy roadway on a Saturday morning and expressing their anger towards the electric car company Tesla. I cannot fabricate that activists said that, but I do see a clear through-line in their political motivations that implicates AI, whether by tacit choice or not. Whether is it Musk's visible turn to toxic technopolitics, his role in accelerating climate change (whilst greenwashing debates through his electric car company that runs on climate-destructive artificial intelligence), or his more personal infractions of fragrant misogyny and anti-LGBTX rhetoric, Elon Musk is implicated in numerous controversies. The overlaying of the three themes is particularly powerful in the context of the UK, where a new Online Safety Bill (2025) and a government legislation criminalising protests has appeared to demonstrably crack down on personal freedoms in both offline and online spaces with the aid of AI technologies. For example, the UK government has banned the weaning of masks at protests arguing that masks are deployed as an intimidation tool. However, there is a widespread understanding that masks are a defence against AI-driven facial recognition technologies that are ubiquitous in UK streets. This new legislation may also support why so many Tesla Takedown campaigners took to wearing elaborate costumes. Thus, the political aesthetics of the protest were not only signalling grievances at Elon Musk, but protecting protestors against the draconian surveillance technologies.

While the protests did little to damage Tesla's share prices or Musk's reputation or stop the proliferation of AI in UK society, it would be a misstep to assume the protests were a failure. I contended above that we should transcend the binary between social movement success and failure in order to consider, however small, how a specific single-issue protest speaks to, and represents, wider political anxieties. I also suggested that the latency/visibility binary is further ruptured by a social movement that originated and organized on the fringe social media platform Bluesky. The use of social media to amplify IRL protests, and action is not new, but the three combined anti-Musk campaigns in the UK seem to imply we have entered a new era of activism that foregrounds action IRL not necessarily over and above social media, but certainly on par with it. Years previously, Evgeny Morozov (2006) infamously critiqued the rise of digital activism, calling those who participate in resistance movements online as only idly participating to look cool and political to their friends without any actual effort required. Morozov (2006, p. X) deployed the rather lazy portmanteau "slacktivism" to describe those who think they care about causes, but who are too insouciant to do it IRL. Clearly, we are past this point. Action on the ground is more prevalent than ever, as well as action on social media.

Finally, this article interprets the Tesla Takedown campaign as a demonstration against AI's unchecked proliferation in daily life via an examination of the political aesthetics of the protests. But this concluding observation raises two preliminary cautions. First, while the political aesthetics of the Tesla Takedown campaign were vividly realized through alien masks, Ukrainian flags, and an inflatable shark suit, there was also an absence of some very important political aesthetics. Palestine flags and other markers of Palestine solidarity were missing from the campaign; somewhat surprisingly given the defiantly left politics of the group. Second, we should not assume that anti AI ideology is mainstream, popular opinion or implicitly

underwriting other social movements as I have shown in the case of the Tesla Takedown. There are various anti-AI social movements emerging in the UK, including Stop Killer Robots and Algorithmic Justice League, but their presence on the streets and on social media has been marginal at the time of writing. Going forward, however, I suspect anti-AI imaginaries to become more visible and interoperable to wider social concerns.

References

Ante, L. (2023). How Elon Musk's Twitter activity moves cryptocurrency markets. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 186*, 1–14. doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2022.122112

Archer, A., & Sie, M. (2023). Using stars for moral navigation: An ethical exploration into celebrity. *Journal of Applied Philosophy, 40*(2), 340–357. doi.org/10.1111/japp.12637

Balduf, L., Sokoto, S., Ascigil, O., Tyson, G., Scheuermann, B., Korczynski, M., Castro, I., & Krol, M. (2024). Looking at the blue skies of Bluesky. In *Proceedings of the 2024 ACM on Internet Measurement Conference* (pp. 76–91). ACM.

Barassi, V. (2015). *Activism on the web: Everyday struggles against digital capitalism*. Routledge.

Bathaee, Y. (2017). The artificial intelligence black box and the failure of intent and causation. *Harvard Journal of Law & Technology, 31*, 889–938. jolt.law.harvard.edu/assets/articlePDFs/v31/The-Artificial-Intelligence-Black-Box-and-the-Failure-of-Intent-and-Causation-Yavar-Bathaee.pdf

Bittner, V. K. (2023). Dialectic icons: Controversial public figures as emotional catalysts in contentious political discourse. *Emotions and Society, 5*(3), 257–276. doi.org/10.1332/263169021X16824558710337

Bonilla, Y., & Rosa, J. (2015). #Ferguson: Digital protest, hashtag ethnography, and the racial politics of social media in the United States. *American Ethnologist, 42*(1), 4–17. doi.org/10.1111/amet.12112

Bown, A., & Bristow, D. (Eds.). (2019). *Post memes: Seizing the memes of production*. Punctum Books.

boyd, d. (2026). Social media is now parasocial media. *Social Media + Society, 12*(2). doi.org/10.1177/2056305126143748

Breuer, A. (2012). *The role of social media in mobilizing political protests: Evidence from the Tunisian revolution* (Discussion Paper No. 10/2012). German Development Institute.

Carabantes, M. (2020). Black-box artificial intelligence: An epistemological and critical analysis. *AI & Society, 35*(2), 309–317. doi.org/10.1007/s00146-019-00888-w

Center for the Study of Organized Hate. (2025, May 12). *Elon Musk, X, and amplification of Islamophobia in the UK*. csohate.org/2025/05/12/elon-musk-x-islamophobia-in-uk-report/

Conger, K., & Mac, R. (2024). *Character limit: How Elon Musk destroyed Twitter*. Penguin Press.

de Seta, G. (2026). "Hi everyone, I am Yilong Ma": Synthetic impersonators and despicable celebrities in global media circuits. *First Monday, 31*(5). doi.org/10.5210/fm.v31i5.15440

Doctorow, C. (2025). *Enshittification: Why everything suddenly got worse and what to do about it*. MCD.

Factually. (2026, June 5). *How many tweets per day does Elon Musk average?* factually.co/fact-checks/technology/elon-musk-average-tweets-per-day-58b37c

Failla, A., & Rossetti, G. (2024). "I'm in the Bluesky tonight": Insights from a year worth of social data. *PLOS ONE, 19*(11). doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0310330

Ferrari, E. (2022). Latency and crisis: Mutual aid activism in the Covid-19 pandemic. *Qualitative Sociology, 45*, 413–431. doi.org/10.1007/s11133-022-09513-7

Fine, G. A. (1996). Reputational entrepreneurs and the memory of incompetence: Melting supporters, partisan warriors, and images of President Harding. *American Journal of Sociology, 101*(5), 1159–1193. doi.org/10.1086/230820

Gerbaudo, P. (2012). *Tweets in the streets: Social media and contemporary activism*. Pluto Press.

Gray, J. (2005). Antifandom and the moral text: Television without pity and textual dislike. *American Behavioral Scientist, 48*(7), 840–858. doi.org/10.1177/0002764204273171

Hao, K. (2025). *Empire of AI: Dreams and nightmares in Sam Altman's OpenAI*. Penguin Press.

Hawkins, A. (2025, February 25). Tesla Takedown wants to hit Elon Musk where it hurts. *The Verge*. https://www.theverge.com/tesla/618572/tesla-takedown-wants-to-hit-elon-musk-where-it-hurts

Heaton, J. (2022). Pseudonyms are used throughout: A footnote, unpacked. *Qualitative Inquiry, 28*(1), 123–132. doi.org/10.1177/10778004211048379

Hilt, E. (2024, November 15). *Elon Musk's xAI facility is polluting South Memphis*. Southern Environmental Law Center. selc.org/news/elon-musks-xai-facility-is-polluting-south-memphis/

Horst, H. A., & Miller, D. (2012). The digital and the human: A prospectus for digital anthropology. In H. A. Horst & D. Miller (Eds.), *Digital anthropology* (pp. 3–35). Berg.

Kerr, D. (2026, April 15). NAACP lawsuit accuses Elon Musk's xAI of polluting Black neighborhoods near Memphis. *The Guardian*. theguardian.com/technology/2026/apr/14/naacp-lawsuit-elon-musk-xai-memphis

Klein, N. (2020, December 8). *The Great Reset conspiracy smoothie*. naomiklein.org/the-great-reset-conspiracy-smoothie/

Levine, S. (2024, October 3). Musk's millions in right wing gifts began earlier than previously known. *The Guardian*. theguardian.com/technology/2024/oct/03/elon-musk-rightwing-political-donations

MacFarland Taylor, S. (2024). The wrong way home: St. Elon's digital cult of personality, messianic mediations of Mars, and the Musketeer meme militia. In E. M. Mazur & S. MacFarland Taylor (Eds.), *Religion and outer space* (pp. 233–254). Routledge.

Madsen, D. O. (2025). Algorithmic charisma under strain: Elon Musk and the dynamics of founder myths in the platform era. *Administrative Sciences, 15*(10), Article 394. doi.org/10.3390/admsci15100394

McLaughlin, B., Dunn, J. A., Velez, J. A., & Hunter, J. (2022). There must be a villain: Political threats, narrative thought, and political violence. *Communication Quarterly*. doi.org/10.1080/01463373.2022.2109978

McQuillan, D. (2022). *Resisting AI: An anti-fascist approach to artificial intelligence*. Bristol University Press.

McQuillan, D. (2025). Labour's AI action plan — a gift to the far right. *Computer Weekly*. computerweekly.com/opinion/Labours-AI-Action-Plan-a-gift-to-the-far-right

Melucci, A. (1989). *Nomads of the present*. Temple University Press.

Melucci, A. (1996). *Challenging codes: Collective action in the information age*. Cambridge University Press.

Moore, S. (2013). Taking up space: Anthropology and embodied protest. *Radical Anthropology, 7*, 6–16. sheehanmoore.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Moore-Taking-Up-Space.pdf

Murgia, M. (2024). *Code dependent: Living in the shadow of AI*. Picador.

Parham, J. (2024, December 26). The year villainy won. *Wired*. wired.com/story/the-year-villainy-won/

Peterson, B., & Hiller, J. (2026, August 13). Elon Musk, the world's most famous EV pioneer, is now leaning into fossil fuels. *The Wall Street Journal*. wsj.com/business/energy-oil/elon-musk-the-worlds-most-famous-ev-pioneer-is-now-leaning-into-fossil-fuels-cad4888f

Seetharaman, D., & Stempel, J. (2026, May 5). Musk wanted $80 billion to colonize Mars, OpenAI president testifies at trial. *Reuters*. reuters.com/sustainability/boards-policy-regulation/musk-wanted-80-billion-colonize-mars-openai-president-testifies-trial-2026-05-05/

Shah, A. (2017). Ethnography? Participant observation, a potentially revolutionary praxis. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory, 7*(1), 45–59. doi.org/10.14318/hau7.1.008

Shirky, C. (2008). *Here comes everybody: The power of organizing without organizations*. Penguin Press.

Tkacz, N., & Gehl, R. W. (2025). After Twitter: Fragmentation, platform polities and protective sociality. *Social Media + Society, 11*(3). doi.org/10.1177/2056305125136690

Van Dijck, J. (2013). *The culture of connectivity: A critical history of social media*. Oxford University Press.

Varoufakis, Y. (2024). *Technofeudalism: What killed capitalism*. Penguin.

Weidhase, N., & Wilde, P. (2026). "Gone too soon": Zombie humour on social media as cultural critique of the British monarchy. *Information, Communication & Society, 29*(1), 113–130. doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2025.2497945

Werbner, P., Webb, M., & Spellman-Poots, K. (Eds.). (2014). *The political aesthetics of global protest: The Arab Spring and beyond*. Edinburgh University Press.

Zednik, C. (2021). Solving the black box problem: A normative framework for explainable artificial intelligence. *Philosophy & Technology, 34*(2), 265–288. doi.org/10.1007/s13347-019-00382-7