

# Research \* Online Hostility: Understanding pro-social bystander actions and their consequences (Lasse Lindekilde & Simon Karg)

Political hostility is on the rise. The increasing polarisation in the political landscape stands hand in hand with political disengagement and apathy of third parties, and presents a challenge to our democratic institutions.

This growing hostility couldn't be more palpable than on the web. Scrolling on your favourite social media platform, you probably run into some hate speech from time to time. How do you typically react in these situations? While research within political science has focused on the hostility and explored how politically hostile behaviour develops, much less attention is given to bystanders and the potential of pro-social bystander reactions to mitigate the negative impact of online political hostility. So this week, we have invited [Lasse Lindekilde](#) (Political Science at Aarhus University) & [Simon Karg](#) (Political Science at Aarhus University & [Interacting Minds Centre](#)) from the [STANDBY](#) project to discuss how their research focuses on reactions of bystanders when exposed to online political hostility.

Through an array of mixed methods, this project aims at studying the behaviour of bystanders on various social media platforms. How do we react when we encounter online hostility targeted at others? What makes an UPstander and what motivates them? What role plays the platform's incentives in managing hate speech?

## Topics and Resources mentioned in this episode:

**[00:01:20] STANDBY: Pro-social Bystander Reactions to Online Political Hostility**

The project argues, that pro-social reactions from cyber-bystanders represent an un-realized potential in mitigating the detrimental effects of online political hostility on democracy. As such, the focus is on how ordinary citizens react as bystanders to online political hostility.

<https://ps.au.dk/forskning/forskningsprojekter/standby>

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## **ROPH: Research on Online Political Hostility**

The Research on Online Political Hostility (ROPH) Project provides in-depth knowledge of the (i) causes, (ii) consequences, and (iii) counter-strategies related to online political hostility in all its forms.

<https://ps.au.dk/forskning/forskningsprojekter/research-on-online-political-hostility/about-the-roph-project>

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## **#Iamhere**

“A world citizens’ network, with more than 150,000 members in 14 countries, which promotes, defends and upholds freedom of speech and democracy.” They set up activism campaigns and propose workshop and training programmes, focused on recognising and fighting hate speech and online harassment.

Official website: <https://iamhereinternational.com/>

For an overview and commentary on the movement see:

- Wikipedia page:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iamhere\\_\(social\\_movement\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iamhere_(social_movement))
- Buerger, C. (2021). #iamhere: Collective Counterspeech and the Quest to Improve Online Discourse. *Social Media + Society*, 7(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051211063843>

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## **Pepe the Frog**

A cartoon character, memefied and corrupted by fame?

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pepe\\_the\\_Frog#Appropriation\\_by\\_the\\_alt-right](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pepe_the_Frog#Appropriation_by_the_alt-right)

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## **Report on the survey data (in danish)**

[https://pure.au.dk/portal/files/271291115/Danskernes\\_oplevelse\\_af\\_had\\_pa\\_de\\_sociale\\_medier\\_Rapport\\_Aarhus\\_Universitet\\_.pdf](https://pure.au.dk/portal/files/271291115/Danskernes_oplevelse_af_had_pa_de_sociale_medier_Rapport_Aarhus_Universitet_.pdf)

## Learn more about STANDBY and its team

- [STANDBY's official webpage](#)
- [Lasse Lindekilde's research profile](#)
- [Simon Karg's research profile](#)
- [Tanja Hansen's research profile](#)