Why can’t handling social media get less complex and require a little less dexterity? At the same time we had riots across the UK, George Osbourne announced that the speed of economic recovery in the UK would be slower than anticipated and Google’s online web-based ecosystem was boosted by the purchase of Motorola Mobility. I am compelled by the multitude of interfaces, forms of social media through to a range of mobile devices.

In his recent book Simplicity (2011), Edward de Bono’s message is clear - simplicity makes complex things effortless to digest. Moreover, simplicity does not mean to oversimplify or to lose meaning. Simplicity within the ‘internet of things’ requires creative solutions to coordinate, aggregate and possibly syndicate multi-sensory information.



Connectivity issues in troubled times ([via](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/click_online/9563177.stm))

Four devices were used by two of us in my south London flat, as a way to attribute meaning to the chains of riot police whizzing past the front windows in an ongoing game of cat and mouse. In the short term these interfaces provided reassurance, data and information. It was the lack of immediate local / street level news that provoked both of us to use multiple devices, piecing together and editing-out information by our street location. Facebook, Twitter and the Guardian comments engaged an international audience in a local content with video footage, comments and maps. Information moved slower on the rolling news than in the comments based interfaces with the former inciting addictive anxiety, whilst the other media enabled a form of discovery without the need to get caught up in ground level spectatorship by heading outside. This wasn’t about remaining distant from our local area but a way of staying informed whilst actively engaging in the process of working through and understanding.

In the medium term the same medias that informed about the riots became the feedback loops that created solutions for community clean-ups and posted reflections through various online formats. One example was the co-design of infographics by two separate Tweeters over the duration of the riots in London. One Tweeter created a map showing the locations of where the riots were taking place, whilst another Tweeter created another layer to the map showing areas of social deprivation. These involvements nudged at the why and how of the riots with visual simplicity, whilst some Tweets and news articles presented over simplifications in the haste to make sense of the complexity.



Twitter - a neutral medium of conflicting agendas ([via](http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/blog/2011/aug/10/uk-riots-responsible-use-of-twitter))

The ‘internet of things’ evokes the force of things, be it to riot or to clean up after the riots. The closed Blackberry Messenger system enabled the destructive force of a group to act at speed and created a potent connectivity within a closed system. There was a level of dexterity and simplicity involved in both the rioters and the clean up communities to move to both destructive and constructive modes of action. As the political theorist, Jane Bennett points in her work on the ecology of things (2010), things have affect, force and thing-power. The giddiness of anxiety created by the rolling news enabled the rioters to sustain a national force through Blackberry’s closed ‘internet of things’ enabling connected rioters to copy the process of seizing street level power through violence. It is often these pivotal moments that highlight the motion that makes the ways technologies work become visible again, the networks, applications and tech-devices involved that alerts me to the complex and often ambidextrous ways in which I strive for a simplicity of data and not an oversimplification of information.

The ‘internet of things’ as a term that makes sense when their mechanisms are visible to the public through the debate of net-based media. This engaging topic should initiate and further develop projects working towards simplicity by enabling new tools, methods, interfaces, platforms and systems to emerge in response to our shared day-to-day data so as to make sense of our ordinary and extraordinary lives, to enable a simplicity of exchange and communal growth.

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LCC will soon be launching the DigiLab within which Dr Amanda Windle will explore the ‘internet of things’ within an environment of research, learning and knowledge transfer. The DigiLab is funded by the Higher Education Innovation Fund to work on research projects with industry in the area of digital and media convergence. Projects will focus on our interactions with digital technologies including issues with metadata.

All students studying at LCC will need to engage with convergent digital disciplines at a deeper level moving between video, audio, textual and visual artefacts so that upon graduation they are able to move confidently into careers that will no doubt expect that they connect and shape with demand a level of dexterity in the tools that engage with our ‘internet of things’.