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Quantifying and comparing web news portals' article salience using the VoxPopuli tool

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Issue salience

- **Definition**

„A level of concern, attention or importance placed on a given issue.”

(Wlezien 2005)

- **Measurement**

- Conceptual challenge: what is an „issue” anyway?
- NYT Citation Index or equivalent
 - „issue” equated with **key term** (or nowadays **hashtag**)
 - reflects primarily salience according to media **workers’** and **owners’** rather than to media **audience**
 - can be quickly obtained by computer
- Gallup’s „Most Important Problem” question and derivatives
 - most important **issue** for a respondent needs not be a **problem** at all
 - can only be (not so quickly) obtained by poll

News portals readers' comments

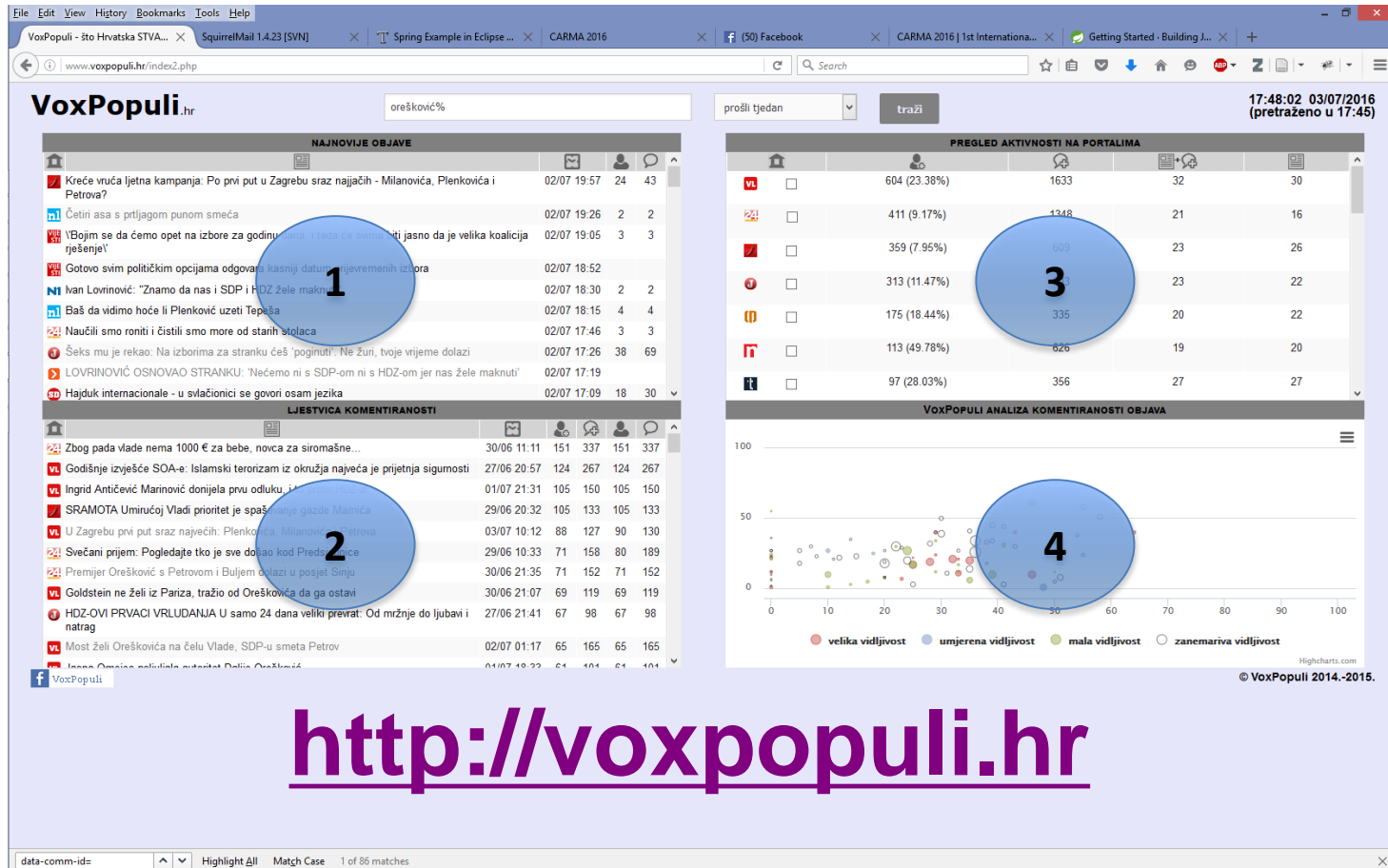
The collage displays four news portal screenshots with their respective headlines and reader comments:

- Top-left (Independent):** Headline: "Nigel Farage resigns: Douglas Carswell brands UKIP leader 'electorally disastrous' after resignation". Comment by 'averageperson': "Carswell is finished. He has never changed from his Tory past and has always been a square peg in a round hole. Kick the traitor out of UKIP now".
- Top-right (Independent):** Headline: "Nigel Farage resigns: Douglas Carswell brands UKIP leader 'electorally disastrous' after resignation". Comment by 'averageperson': "Carswell is finished. He has never changed from his Tory past and has always been a square peg in a round hole. Kick the traitor out of UKIP now".
- Bottom-left (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung):** Headline: "Die Briten verlassen die EU". Comment by 'malavi': "ova gamad komentatorska je refleksija društvenog stanja u hrvatskoj, nećemo mi nikad niti razvijeni dok ne promijenj mentalitet".
- Bottom-right (24h.hr):** Headline: "Maletić: Možda će se pojaviti još neki kandidat za čelo HDZ-a". Comment by 'kosopoliti': "Najavio je svoju kandidaturu i Sekeš. Ideologija je jako slična, samo je upitno dali će ga pustiti na granici da posjeti rat suradnika i plati dobijenu nafu iz rata i Posavinu jer im nije sve isplatio".





Readers' comments properties

- **Plentiful, freely available, (mostly) peristent and fully public**
 - up to ~1.000 commentators / ~10.000 comments per portal per day
- **Real time media audience („public”) response**
 - commenting starts within minutes after publication of an article and finishes within few hours
- **Unsolicited and deep**
 - posting a comment indicates commentator's real interest in something contained in the news story (one or more „issues”)
 - no fixed predetermined structure, hence also difficult to code
- **Pseudoanonymous**
 - self-censorship is significantly suppressed
 - individual commentators' can be tracked in time and across portals
 - „professionals” can quickly be identified and discounted for











VoxPopuli - news article salience






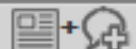








Published articles

NAJNOVIJE OBJAVE				
	Marijana Petir: Podvaljuju nam hranu koju Europa ne želi!	05/07 19:31		
	Raspisali upitan natječaj za predstojnike ureda HZZ-a...	05/07 19:22	1	1
	Kovač otkrio koja su mjerila potrebna za deblokadu, srpski mediji tvrde: 'Hrvatska je tražila novce'	05/07 19:00		
	Beljak za RTL: 'HDZ-u ne zamjeram ništa, ali prema nama su se podcjenjivački odnosili'	05/07 18:55		
	Hrvatska je dva puta pokušala zaustaviti Srbiju, nije uspjela	05/07 18:39		
	Policija i tužiteljstvo sumnjiče pet osoba da su HNK "Ivan pl. Zajc" oštetili za više stotina tisuća kuna	05/07 18:25		
	UŽIVO Ministar Miro Kovač o odnosima sa Srbijom	05/07 17:10		
	RTS: Hrvatska dala suglasnost Srbiji za poglavlje 23	05/07 13:47	1	1
	HASANBEGOVIĆ EKSKLUZIVNO ZA JUTARNJI 'Zašto se neću kandidirati za šefa HDZ-a'	05/07 13:01		

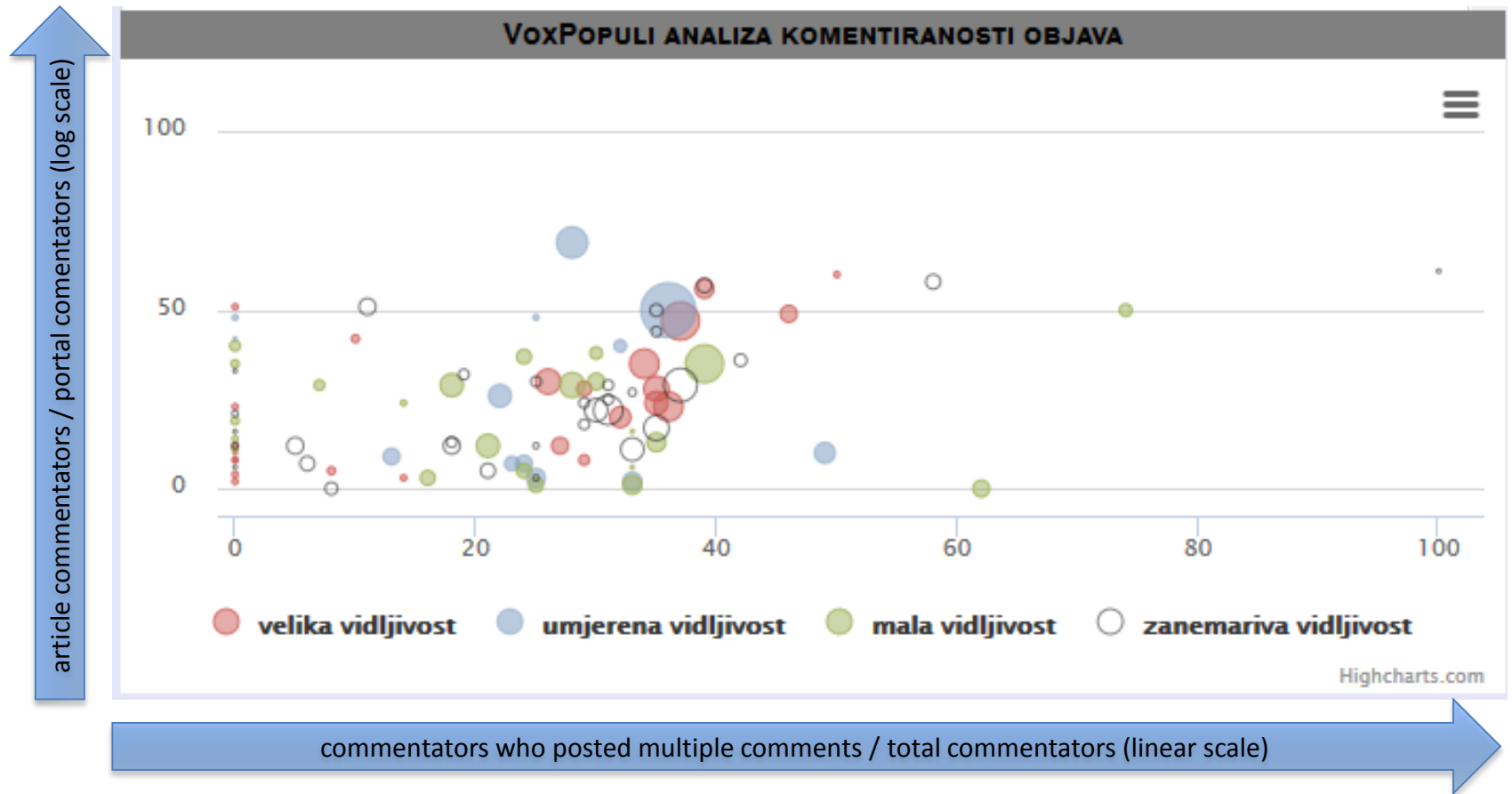
Absolute article salience

LJESTVICA KOMENTIRANOSTI						
	Huligani napali Ivana Rakitića i otjerali ga s odmora na Ugljanu	03/07 11:30	456	966	457	969
	Šok i tuga: Rakitića, suprugu i djecu s Ugljana odveli zaštitari	03/07 19:10	221	497	223	524
	Rakitić pred huliganima pobjegao s otoka Ugljana!	02/07 23:05	221	439	221	439
	Raketa opet na odmoru: Nitko nam ne može oduzeti osmijeh	03/07 23:22	169	378	174	389
	EKSKLUZIVNO - BRUKA I SRAMOTA Huligani potjerali Ivana Rakitića s Ugljana	03/07 20:28	145	225	151	233
	Huligani porazbijali vilu koju je unajmio Rakitić, nogometaš s obitelji pobjegao s Ugljana	02/07 11:49	136	228	136	228
	Ivan Rakitić nakon sramotnog napada: "Sada je sve dobro..."	02/07 12:40	132	276	132	276
	Ćorluka: Hvala vam Hrvatice i Hrvati, oprostite za neuspjehe	27/06 21:33	125	210	125	210
	Policija: Kamen je bačen, ali Rakitić nije ni napadnut ni ozlijeđen	04/07 00:10	101	217	108	225
	Nevjerojatna Ronaldova gesta: Neću slaviti dok moj brat plače	01/07 03:15	97	166	97	166


Portal statistics (for 4.7.2016)

PREGLED AKTIVNOSTI NA PORTALIMA					
					
 <input type="checkbox"/>	1580 (100.00%)	8048	267	155	
 <input type="checkbox"/>	1335 (100.00%)	3466	179	186	
 <input type="checkbox"/>	961 (100.00%)	3464	143	146	
 <input type="checkbox"/>	615 (100.00%)	1302	87	110	
 <input type="checkbox"/>	470 (100.00%)	695	83	118	
 <input type="checkbox"/>	350 (100.00%)	694	57	44	
 <input type="checkbox"/>	216 (100.00%)	442	69	100	

Relative (portal-normalized) salience



From *VoxPopuli* to *VoxPoPolling*

- ***VoxPoPolling***
 - real-time public opinion monitoring system
 - faster, more flexible, cheaper, deeper and more valid than traditional polling methodology
 - **To-do list**
 - Clarify operational definition of an „issue” (e.g. as key term network/map)
 - Construct quantive measure of „issueness” (an „issue spectrum”) of a particular news article
 - Develop methodology for coding of readers’ comments against selected „issues”
 - Develop methodology for DSP profiling and construction of representative sample of commentators
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Thank you for your attention...

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