Review of: "When did post-truth begin? From climate change denial to war-mongering nationalism"

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The attempt to link a broad social issue with a narrower historical movement is interesting; I felt that this generated rich insights into the politics of knowledge in contemporary society, even though I had reservations about the success of the central argument (the link back to climate change specifically).

There are two main components to my reservations.

The first, as pointed out by several reviewers, is that 'post-truth' is messy and complex, whose roots can be traced in back to a range of earlier historic precedents. I won't dwell on this further here, as I think the other reviewers have addressed this thoroughly, except to note that I was surprised (particularly given inclusion of his writing on the anthropocene) that Latour's 2004 article wasn't mentioned.

Latour, B. (2004). Why has critique run out of steam? From matters of fact to matters of concern. Critical inquiry, 30(2), 225-248.

The second is different, and for full disclosure plays more to my own research interests. Rather than assuming that there is an essential quality of 'post truth' that has enabled it to travel further and faster than scientific truth, I would suggest it's worth noting that the study that prompted this piece focused on Twitter. I don't think that this can be seen as an innocent or neutral setting in which to trace the relative reach or velocity of claims to knowledge; instead, I've argued that the platform has structured itself around logics that amplify populist politics, being designed and policed in ways that value emotional response over evidence and reasoning. The 'velocity' of knowledge could, therefore, be seen as an emergent quality dependent on infrastructure, policies and social practices, rather than essential to this kind of knowledge claim.

Oliver, M. (2020). Infrastructure and the post-truth era: Is Trump Twitter's fault?.Postdigital Science and Education, 2(1), 17-38.

As a minor note, I would suggest being cautious about dismissing the whole of post-modernism as 'empty'. This does a disservice to the critical and deconstructive work it inspired, wihch has arguably been important in opening discussions in areas such as gender, 'race' and so on. There would be an irony in an article about post-truth glossing over evidence of value in the pursuit of a political point.