

# THE CONVERSATION

## Turning scientists into journalists

Stephen Harris  
Commissioning editor



## Research expertise

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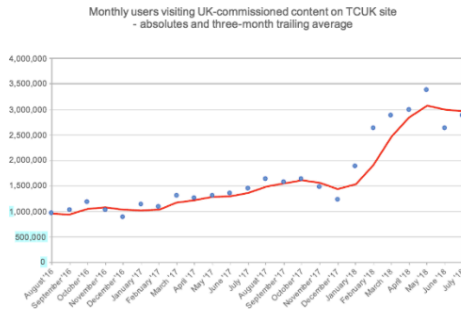
## Experienced journalists



# Republishers



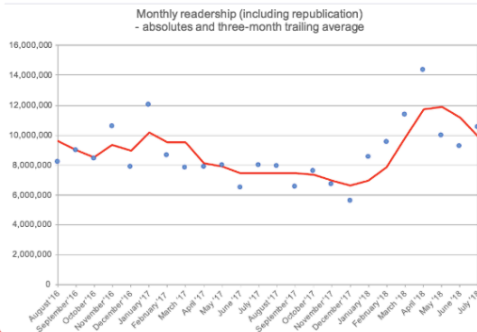
# TCUK website receives 3,000,000 monthly visitors



(Jul '18)



# TCUK content read 10m times a month



(Jul '18)



**Battle for  
attention**



**Tell me something  
I don't know**



**Tell me what  
I want to know,  
not what  
you want me to know**



## What makes a good research article?

- Explanation of topic in the news
- Comment or analysis of events in the news
- New or recent research
- Broad topic with news-peg
- Answer to an interesting question



## Things we like

- News
- Explainers
- Questions
- Stories
- Lists
- Opinion
- Timely
- Fun
- Unusual
- Surprising
- Universal
- Dramatic



## Think about your audience

Intelligent, educated, curious  
...but not interested in wading  
through dense, academic prose

It's not about 'dumbing down'  
...but a generalist reader  
doesn't see things like a  
specialist researcher



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Academic rigour, journalistic fair

Arts - Culture - Business - Economy - Cities - Education - Environment - Energy - Health - Medicine - Politics - Society - Science - Technology - Brexit



## Africa is splitting in two – here is why

March 28, 2018 9:37am BST | Modified April 7, 2018 10:08am BST

Google Earth: Data SIO, NOAA, US Navy, NGA, GEBCO

**Email** | **Twitter** (475) | **Facebook** (384) | **LinkedIn** | **Print**

A large crack, stretching several kilometres, made a sudden appearance recently in south-western Kenya. The tear, which continues to grow, caused part of the Nairobi-Narok highway to collapse. Initially, the appearance of the crack was linked to tectonic activity along the East African Rift. But although geologists [now think](#) that this feature is most likely an erosional gully, questions remain as to why it has formed in the location that it did and whether its appearance is at all connected to the ongoing East African Rift. For example, the crack could be the result of the erosion of soft soils infilling an old rift-related fault.

The Earth is an ever-changing planet, even though in some respects change might be almost unnoticeable to us. Plate tectonics is a good example of this. But every now and again something dramatic happens and leads to renewed questions about the African continent splitting in

**Author**

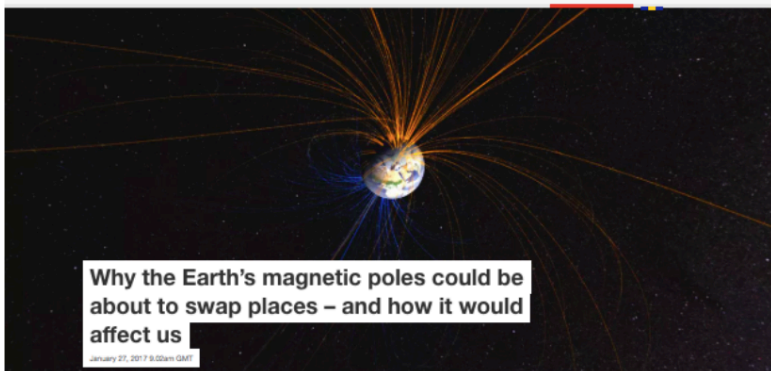
**Lucia Perez Diaz**  
Postdoctoral Researcher, Fault Dynamics Research Group, Royal Holloway

**Disclosure statement**

Lucia Perez Diaz does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

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## Why the Earth's magnetic poles could be about to swap places – and how it would affect us

January 27, 2017 9:05am GMT

The Earth's magnetic field is hugely important to our survival. [NASA Southwest Space Flight Center/Photo: JPL/ESA](#)

**Email** | **Twitter** (308) | **Facebook** (2,26) | **LinkedIn** | **Print**

The Earth's [magnetic field](#) surrounds our planet like an invisible force field – protecting life from harmful solar radiation by deflecting charged particles away. Far from being constant, this field is continuously changing. Indeed, our planet's history includes at least several hundred global magnetic reversals, where north and south magnetic poles swap places. So when's the next one happening and how will it affect life on Earth?

During a reversal the magnetic field won't be zero, but will assume a weaker and more complex form. It [may fall to](#) 10% of the present-day strength and have magnetic poles at the equator or even the simultaneous existence of multiple "north" and "south" magnetic poles.

Geomagnetic reversals occur a few times every million years on average.

**Authors**

**Phil Livemore**  
Associate Professor of geophysics, University of Leeds

**Jon Mound**  
Associate Professor of Geophysics, University of Leeds

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## The San Andreas fault is about to crack – here's what will happen when it does

May 11, 2016 2:28pm BST



**Email** | **Twitter** (148) | **Facebook** (598) | **LinkedIn** | **Print**

The director of the [Southern California Earthquake Center](#), Thomas Jordan, made an announcement recently that would have sent a chill down the spine of every Californian: that the San Andreas fault appears to be in a critical state and as such, could generate a large earthquake imminently. Of course, the reiteration of the seismic hazard to Californians will be nothing surprising, but what is new is the warning that the southern portion of the fault ["looks like it's locked, loaded and ready to go"](#).

**Author**

**Matthew Blackett**  
Senior Lecturer in Physical Geography and Natural Hazards, Coventry University

**Disclosure statement**

Matthew Blackett does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

**Partners**

**Coventry University**

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[View the full list](#)





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### It's nonsense to say fracking can be made safe, whatever guidelines we come up with

June 26, 2017 10:15am BST

Can we mitigate the risks associated with fracking? [Justin Woodford/Flickr, CC BY-NC-ND](#)

**Email** Can fracking be safe? A new study suggests how fracking – the process of extracting oil and gas trapped in rocks deep underground by blasting water into the rock at high pressure – can be conducted without causing earthquakes, which is one of the [most well known concerns](#). While this kind of research can help produce guidelines to reduce the risks associated with fracking, ultimately, it makes no sense to talk of fracking being entirely "safe".

**Twitter** 113

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**Author**


**Richard Davies**  
Pro-Vice Chancellor for Engagement and Internationalisation, Newcastle University

**Disclosure statement**

Richard Davies leads the REF2014 Researching Fracking in Europe consortium, which has been funded by Shell, Chevron, Statoil, GDP, Statoil, Centrica and Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). He formerly worked in the oil and gas industry and is a

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### Is Britain's 'largest oil discovery in decades' all it's cracked up to be?

April 3, 2017 3:14pm BST

[Eduardo Peltor / shutterstock](#)

**Email** A large oil find has been declared 60 miles west of Shetland, off the north coast of Scotland. It's being described as the UK's "[largest undeveloped discovery](#)". Taken at face value, this is exciting news for an industry still reeling after the oil price collapse of the past few years (environmentalists though are [less enthusiastic](#)).

**Twitter** 21

**Facebook** 127

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**Authors**

**John Richard Underhill**  
Chair of Exploration Geoscience & Chief Scientist, Heriot-Watt University

**Patrick Corbett**  
Professor of Carbonate Petroleum Geomechanics, Heriot-Watt University


**Disclosure statement**

John Underhill is the Chief Scientist at Heriot-Watt University. He has received research support from the oil and gas industry and academic bodies.

Hurricane Energy specialises in trying to extract oil from so-called

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### We could use old coal mines to decarbonise heat – here's how

November 27, 2017 1:30pm GMT

[Hazel/FFF/Shutterstock.com](#)

**Email** Fossil fuels currently dominate the production of electricity and heat. Although renewable energy accounts for around [a quarter](#) of electricity produced in the UK, the production of central heating is dominated by natural gas, which supplies around [20% of UK heat demand](#) (the UK has been a net importer of gas since 2004).

**Twitter** 55

**Facebook** 136

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**Print**

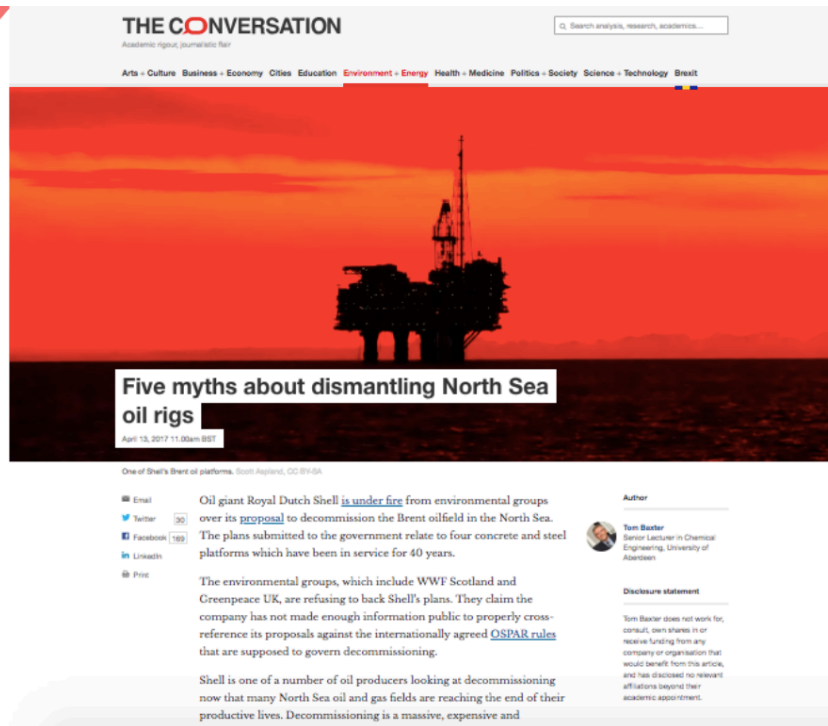
**Authors**

**Charlotte Adams**  
Assistant Professor, Durham University

**Jon Gluyas**  
Durham University

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### One-line test

- You know you've got a good story if you can summarise it in one sentence
- To do this you need to work out what the right angle is
- Identify the most important or interesting thing to your readers



### How to write for The Conversation

- Follow the news
- Tell us about your latest research
- Tell us about other research
- Speak to university press office
- Pitch an idea  
([theconverastion.com/uk/pitches](http://theconverastion.com/uk/pitches))



### We want to hear about:

- Your opinion on something you read or heard in the news, *as soon as possible*
- New angles or approaches to stories
- Ideas for 'big picture' pieces or analysis
- New research from you or others
- Important research or newsworthy events that are NOT being talked about



### Thank you!

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[stephen.harris@theconversation.com](mailto:stephen.harris@theconversation.com)

