"(Mis)understanding political participation"

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich (Germany)

11. & 12. October 2013

Book of Abstracts

The conference is organized by the ECREA sections Communication & Democracy and Gender & Communication, and supported by the Media and Communication sections of the German Communication Association (DGPuK), the German Sociology Association (DGS), and YECREA.
Keynotes

**Keynote 1: Affordances and constraints of social media for strategies of contention**

*Bart Cammaerts, London School of Economics.*

Introduced by Iñaki Garcia-Blanco.

Social media has been appropriated by activists in order to disseminate social movement frames, to mobilise for direct actions online as well as offline, to coordinate direct action and to selfmediate acts of resistance leading potentially to movement spill-overs. It suffices to point towards the role of social media during the Arab Spring, Occupy, the V for Vinegar protests in Turkey and Brazil, etc. to emphasise this point. In my presentation I will use Foucault’s concept of the technologies of the self to make sense of the various roles social media are playing for protest movements in terms of their self-mediations. Foucault referred to disclosure, examination and remembrance, but I will add a fourth technology of the self, which is highly relevant today, namely amplification. Besides affordances, we also need to acknowledge the constraints inherent to technologies of self-mediation such as social media. These manifest themselves mainly in terms of access, the tensions between individualism and collective identities, issues in relation to narrowcasting and serious concerns at the level of control and surveillance by corporate actors and states.

While an important new tool in the repertoire of contentious action of protest movements, the potency of social media should also not be exaggerated and activists need to be aware of their limitations.

**Keynote 2: Feminism, political participation and the media**

*Christina Scharff, King’s College London.*

Introduced by Iolanda Tortajada.

**Keynote 3: The capture of speech. From street to screen and back again.**

*Andreas Hetzel, Fatih University Istanbul.*

Introduced by Rainer Winter.
Panels

Panel 1: Online/Offline Protest for Gender Equality (Room 115)

The panel analyses and discusses different examples of (feminist) protest which challenge existing patriarchal hegemony and demand gender equality. New media provide feminist activists with new possibilities of political articulation, self-organization and visibilities. At the same time, “old” offline forms of protest and political action obviously are not disappearing. In this panel, case studies of (feminist) protest are presented in which different usage of media becomes apparent: There are activists who run online-campaigns; others provoke attention by (naked) protest on the streets and thereby attract attention from the mass media.

The first aim of this panel is to show how different online and offline strategies are used in order to study the interrelations between political participation, gender and media. The individual presentations address the role of new media technologies as a form of protest but also self-representations of feminist groups in new media, the ambiguities and tensions of protest strategies and political participation, as well as the interaction between offline and online protest strategies.

The second aim of this panel is to initiate a discussion about empirical approaches which take into account the need to situate mediated protest action and political participation within and across cultural contexts. The examples chosen in this panel are located in different cultural contexts; some of them can be regarded as transcultural. The individual presentations in particular are concerned with campaigns against female genital mutilation in Tanzania as well as protests against legislation on abortion prohibition in Turkey; furthermore the transculturally organized protests of the women’s group FEMEN and the campaign “Take back the Tech!” against gender-based violence are examined.

Comparing the different examples of feminist protest and pointing to their similarities and differences, power structures within the protest activism as well as in the cultural contexts become obvious. By analyzing different case studies, the panel aims at discussing different forms of protest and investigating their political potentials.

Mathis Danelzik: Politics of gender and sexuality within participatory campaigns against female genital mutilation – reframing practices and obtaining hegemony in a postcolonial nexus.

Nurit Guttman (2000, pp. 9–27) contends that most analyses of communication campaigns overlook the values that are inscribed in all facets of these interventions.

It is regularly assumed that communication campaigns against female genital mutilation (FGM) contribute to progressive gender roles and a pleasure-embracing attitude towards female sexuality. However, drawing on ethnographic data from four Tanzanian campaigns, it can be shown that the picture is much more complicated.

Different types of actors are involved in participatory campaigns against FGM, ranging from Western donors, African activists to members of target groups. All of them attempt to obtain hegemony about gender and sexuality, but draw on different types of power and aspire to different ideals. The presentation will use specific examples (specifically disagreements between Western donors and African activists about whether female promiscuity is a moral problem or whether culturally condoned female-to-female relationships should be considered detrimental) to carve out a central issue of participation in all political contexts: a fundamental tension between strategic goals (e.g. promoting progressive gender roles) and the deliberative ideal of participation (open dialogue, autonomy of actors, refraining from manipulative techniques, legitimacy of process rather than result).
Esengül Ayyıldız: Reproduction of family values and conservatism through women body: 
Case of protests against “legislation on abortion prohibition” in Turkey

Imagination of Europeanization/Westernization is constructed and defined within the terms of modernization and civilization from the beginning in Turkish Republic (1923) and the explicit indicators on gender are defined and constructed through women bodies and their life worlds (such as dressing and right of childbirth/abortion). The recent debate of “legislation on abortion prohibition” and “right of non-fertility” in the Turkish society shows that “women body” is the first station where political power stakes a claim to in the process of strengthened economy. In this framework, it is argued critically in the light of the studies by Seyla Benhabib, Nancy Frazer, Chantal Mouffe and feminist literature in Turkey that how political power and neo-liberal policy construct their policies on the women body. In short, the communication sphere of the Turkish society around the “legislation on abortion prohibition” is the concern of this study focusing on the protest campaigns against invasion of privacy of women and the way of togetherness of alternative communication paths with alternative political activists will be the odyssey.

Tanja Thomas & Miriam Stehling: Transcultural and Transmedia Practices of Naked Protest: The trans-/local network of FEMEN and its (self-)representations in media discourse

On the one hand images of naked female bodies can be regarded as so common to the point of banality in our mediatized cultures, the naked protest of the women’s group FEMEN on the other hand has drawn much attention of the press and other media outlets. In this paper, we want to address the questions of how female nudity is employed as a means of social change and political participation and how this form of ‘naked politics’ is used, represented and interpreted in different cultural and national contexts as well as in different media.

As first findings suggest, FEMEN’s actions rely on the ambiguity of their naked protest which is used to generate discourse and visibility. FEMEN’s protest practices can be characterized as transcultural. Nevertheless, their actions have to be analyzed in context in order to gain insights into the transformative power in regards to achieving sexual and social equality. We will look at the transcultural and transmedia protest practices of FEMEN by analyzing a) the trans-/local network of FEMEN, b) the self-concept and -representation of FEMEN and c) the trans-/media discourse around FEMEN. Data material includes websites of FEMEN, press articles and other media representations and discourses.

Sigrid Kannengießer: “Take Back the Tech!” – Online/Offline Protest against Gender-Based Violence

The presentation analyses the campaign „Take back the Tech!“ which demands to reclaim information and communication technologies to end violence against women. The campaign is part of the transcultural yearly protest campaign “16 days against gender-based violence”. The main actors of the campaign are feminist activists from different countries. They try to mobilize women and girls to use ICTs to end violence, to speak out and to build solidary action. The protest takes place offline, e.g. in art projects or workshops, as well as online, e.g. in blogs. The presentation follows the questions: Who are the activists running the campaign? What is their aim and which are their strategies and tools? Who is speaking in the campaign and who is not? And what is the relation between online and offline action?

These questions are analysed in a qualitative study: The website of the campaign „Take back the Tech!“ as well as its social networking sites, especially on Facebook, are analysed. Qualitative interviews with involved activists have been conducted. The data was analysed following the Grounded Theory approach.

While the attractiveness of systemic participation, such as party activism and elections, has diminished, more and more citizens discover alternative opportunities of participation in forms of protest, media engagement or political consumerism. Despite the plethora of voices mourning about a declining democratic vitality, we face a differentiation of action modes and grounds that point at an increasing demand for intensifying democratization. It seems that the political expands into all spheres of social life, and by this, experimentally develops new forms of moralizing public affairs. Public criticism nowadays emerges even about formerly unpolitical issues such as food politics or private media use. At the same time, new forms of political engagement integrate into existing ones and the question remains unaddressed whether all these developments allow us to identify new forms of citizenship that creatively connect and renew traditional forms of democratic engagement. Against this backdrop, the research project “Consumer Netizens” focuses on an area of research especially interesting for such a trend towards “creative participation” (Micheletti/McFarland 2012). We researched around 30 citizens, asked them to write diaries about their daily consumption, media use and most importantly: their civic engagement. In addition, we conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with the participants. Our qualitative research aims at overcoming the overly analytical distinction between the non-institutional, the private, and the internet, here and the institutional, the public, and the mass media, there. Instead, the writings of our diarists and their interview statements allow us to take an integrated view on different interconnected modes of political engagement, sequences of actions across the private and the public and finally the tactical connection of addressing civil society, the private household, the media, and the economic sector (media circuits, participation circuits).

Working with reconstructive methods such as Grounded Theory (Strauss/Corbin 1994) and Documentary Method (Bohsnack et al. 2003), we have analyzed the different habitual frameworks of orientations and patterns of practices of our researched diarists. This way, we were able to reconstruct citizenship in the sense of political agency. Citizenship consists of world-views and dispositions which motivate specific modes of political engagement. At the conference, we are going to present preliminary findings from our research.

First, we found rather ‘conventional’ agonal or deliberative forms of citizenship such as the militant social movement activist or the critical public citizen. These participants where predominantly male and can be subsumed under the literature about counter-publics, civil society or party activism.

Second, we also found a clearly female dominated type of consumer netizens. These Privately Public Engaged predominantly are oriented towards their lifestyles. Nonetheless, these are foremost young women who are deeply concerned about the public consequences of how they consume. Therefore, they intensively take part in Social Networks in order to inform themselves about how best to consume, share goods, or abstain from certain products. The conduct of political consumerism is harmony driven and they are quite affectionately and esthetically focused on the microcosm of their homes. Against this backdrop, they also engage in the internet, building personal publics and/or semi-private areas for exchanging experiences and information about the ethics of consumerism. Being oriented towards a ‘better world’ motivates them to sporadically take part in online-petitions as well as civil society activities (e.g. protests).

Third and finally, the lives of the Privately Concerned Professionals are shaped by their jobs and careers. As highly skilled middle-class women as well as men they want to make use of their privileged positions to respond to social hardships and environmental damages by engaging as
political consumers. Norms and practices of these diarists prolong their professional skills into the political and private realms. They use for e.g. online databases to counsel friends or they conduct their own blogs or twitter accounts. The Privately Concerned Professionals use their private life also as a field of experimentation for the sake of public concerns. Some of them publicly stage their private lifestyles on the net, in order to motivate others to follow their example. A main motif of these people is to take part, develop or support projects of individuals or networks in order to further an alternative, more sustainable economy.

From a normative point of view, we will finally discuss the conventional and non-conventional gender roles of these types and the factor of social inequality. Referring to one of our diarist, a jobless, middle-aged, non-academic woman with health problems, we will argue that political consumerism can be applied as a way to fight socio-economic exclusion and sometimes even serves as a struggle for social recognition. In sum, we will show that political consumerism in connection with new media opens up opportunities to participate politically, despite the social constrains of inequality and gender stereotypes. In some cases, we can even witness creative redefinitions of assigned conventional role patterns. Given these empirical findings, we will conclude our contribution with a critical discussion of warnings about slacktivism and increasingly isolated digital activism.

Literature:

**Udo Göttlich & Martin R. Herbers: Speak Your Mind: Mediated Political Participation in German Television Talk Shows.**

With the advent of the digitalization of media and the participatory features of the so-called “Web 2.0", many television formats present themselves on the Internet with elaborate homepages, offering further information on the current themes and topics in the shows as well as the opportunity for the audience to give their opinion through channels of communication, such as e-mail, message boards or accompanying web-chats during the course of the show. With regard to these new conditions, we have to ask, what is the possible future role of television in establishing a mediatized public sphere und enabling political participation, since it is at the same time responsible for recent structural changes with regard to for example the scandalization of political content and audience fragmentation. To answer this question, we take a closer look on the forms of political participation of the citizens on Internet-portals of television talk shows, for example, Hart aber Fair and Maybrit Illner. We analyze the television show’s own websites with regard to interactive features (such as message boards) and their Facebook-channels in order to find responses of citizens towards the topics and issues presented on the show.
**Iñaki Garcia-Blanco & Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies (Cardiff University)**

**Citizens and the BBC: How the British Public Broadcaster Constructs the Public.**

The charter of the BBC assigns the Corporation with a series of public purposes, the first of which is to sustain citizenship and civil society. In addition to this goal, the BBC is also expected to provide the public with impartial and fair information, embracing the widespread normative ideal that an informed public is an essential requisite for a healthy democracy. But for an active citizenship and civil society to be sustained, public service media also need to provide citizens with accepted repertoires for civic expression, with information about the public itself, and with opportunities to voice their concerns. Using extensive content analysis data from the BBC Trust Impartiality Review, this article analyses how the BBC constructs citizenship in its informative programmes (including news bulletins, flagship informative programmes, such as *Newsnight*, but also ‘softer’ programmes, like *BBC Breakfast*). The article explores the broadcaster’s construction of citizenship as a universal idea, and also as a notion related to the different polities within which British citizens are supposed to operate (UK, EU, and the devolved nations).

[Article stemming from the Content Analysis for the BBC Trust Impartiality Review of the Breath of Opinion in the BBC’s Output, carried out by a Cardiff University team led by Richard Sambrook and Karin Wahl-Jorgensen. In addition to the authors of this article, the team was integrated by Mike Berry, Lina Dencik, Jenny Kidd, Arne Hintz and Kerry Moore. The researcher’s team was integrated by: Lucy Bennett, Jonathan Cable, Giulia Dessi, Scott Dewey, Josh Fortey, Struan Gray, Owen Jones, Alexander Peel, Owen Roberts and Jack Williamson.]

---

**Panel 3: Youth and Participation (Room B001)**

**Ulrike Wagner & Christa Gebel: The Appropriation of Socially Relevant Information by Youth.**

Media-related information and participation have always been regarded as closely related to one another. Participation, understood as „politisiche Beteiligung möglichst vieler über möglichst vieles, und zwar im Sinne von Teilnehmen, Teilhaben, Seinen-Teil-Gaben und innerer Anteilnahme am Schicksal eines Gemeinwesens“ (Schmidt 2008: 236) ("political involvement of the greatest number of people regarding the widest possible range of substance, in the sense of participation, entitlement, contribution and internal sympathy with the destiny of a community instance"), is based on information as one of its foundations.

Online media in particular offer youth fast access to a wide range of relatively unfiltered information from a variety of agents. Furthermore, online media provide the opportunity for youth to cease using media on a solely receptive basis as a source of orientation and for youth to become agents in media themselves, providing information themselves, participating in discussions and initiating activities. Thus the possibilities for active entitlement and involvement in shaping social and community life by media-related means, through media-related channels and in media-related spaces. In the course of such mediatization processes, media appropriation has gained in importance in the process of socialization of youth into social subjects capable of action (cf. in detail Wagner et al. 2012).

However, youth are far from exhausting the wide range of possibilities for occupation with socially relevant information. Based on the concept of media socialization as a complex interdependence between society, media and subject, the results of a recently finished study show how adolescents aged 12 to 19 years deal with medial information of social and political relevance. Taking into account differing conditions of development and socialization, the results are evaluated with regard to their significance for a self-determined lifestyle and social participation on the part of adolescents. In order to examine not only individual media appropriation but also group-specific divergences, semi-standardized quantitative measures (online questionnaire, N = 1206) and qualitative case studies (N = 24) were carried out.
The online questionnaire was launched in social networks, especially schuelervz.net, which was the biggest community for this age group at this time (May 2011). The questionnaire had the following parts:

- The need for information of young people
- Media repertoires for information
- The use and evaluation of media regarding information with social and political relevance

The research focused on the online activities of young people. The objective of the analysis in this step is to point out differences in the use of information connected with formal education, age and gender. As a second step qualitative case studies were carried out from July to November 2012 with young people who are interested in political issues. We conducted computer-assisted in-depth interviews: While surfing their favorite media the young people gave us an insight into their media usage, e.g. regarding their favorite web sites and tools.

The emphasis is on processes of appropriation of online information considering personal and social life conditions:

- Information-related ways of use and activities in a converging media ensemble
- Participative use of media regarding information with social and political relevance
- Capabilities, skills and obstacles within the appropriation of information

The objective is to acquire an adequate interpretation of the information behavior regarding the lifeworld conditions of young people.

The results regarding the appropriation of socially relevant information by youth are discussed with an emphasis on new entitlement possibilities: On the one hand the development of a "participatory culture" (Jenkins 2008) through simple tools, such as software, is made easier. These tools require productive acts and generally offer the opportunity to engage in interaction with others at almost any time and any place desired. On the other hand the development of a participatory culture is necessarily also linked with the development of skills in handling media-related interaction and communication structures, especially complex information systems. The discussion addresses the issue of which theoretical frames appear promising in the systematization of participatory and information-related handling of media and for successful utilization in a model of participation, which itself addresses participation with its lifeworld limitations of online and offline and which places the concept in relation to the socio-cultural conditions of the adolescent and to their capabilities and expertise in handling media.

Literature:


Annika Potz, Klaus Kamps & Sven Joekel: Adolescents’ political participation online – a resource based approach.

The rise of online media has provoked both concerns about declining (civic) engagement and participation as well as hopes for new, interactive and (potentially) more inclusive forms of political participation (Emmer/Vowe 2004, Kamps 1999). The academic discourse is particularly focused on the question if online media may foster or reduce political participation among adolescents – the same group that is at the vanguard of using (participatory) online media.

Empirical findings are ambivalent (Bakker/de Vreese 2011, p. 4): Studies show that – on the supply-side – e.g. Websites, Blogs, Twitter or social networks like Facebook have been integrated into the communication-process (Bieber 2011), yet at the same time findings indicate that their interactive capabilities are scarcely used (Siri/Melchner /Wolff 2012). This is underlined by focusing on the demand-side where studies show that political content only accounts for an infinitesimal part of the online-communication of young users. Instead they prefer entertaining content (Emmer/Wolling 2010, p. 44, Bakker/de Vreese 2011, Colemann 2007, Livingstone/Couldry/Markham 2007).

At the same time, we find indicators for new forms of political participation embedded in the online-communication of adolescents. Still, these low-level forms of participation such as sharing a video with political content on Facebook or signing an online-petition are often labelled derogatively as clicktivism or slactivistivm activities (Benett 2008, Christensen 2011). The aim of this paper is to scrutinize the use of these forms of participation that are found (particularly) within social networks.

We are asking if models for explaining political participation are still applicable for adolescents’ online participation? Here, we focus on the resource-model of participation (Brady/Verba/Nie 1995) and try to answer, which resources (family background, political interest, previous media usage, experience, literacy, school…) might explain why adolescents participate online or not? To answer these questions a paper-pencil survey was conducted at two German schools with students from 5th to 13th grade (N=452). Part of the survey were the political and social interest and the knowledge and usage of forms of online-participation.

In line with previous results (Schneekloth 2011), findings indicate that political interest grows with age, yet it is independent from the type of school participants attend. While the Internet in general is an important source of information, activities of online-participation are only rarely used - or even simply unknown by younger audiences. At the same time we see, independent of socio-demographic variables (age, gender), that online-participation with lower activity thresholds are more common than forms, that require more time and input. As a perspective, we like to outline in how far resources and political participation develop over time – as a second (and potential third) wave for a panel study accounting for the general election campaign in Germany are currently carried out.

References:
"Whether or not communicating online disconnects you from people offline. [...] I think that’s overblown. There’s this idea; technology is a tool. Glasses augment your vision, your reality. Steve Jobs said that computers augment your mind. With Facebook and other tools, you can stay connected and get more context from more people. People often think of staying connected as frivolous — it’s not. It’s powerful.”

Social networking sites (SNSs) like Facebook have transformed social relations and have the potential to be powerful political tools as they connect large numbers of people, regardless of space and time. SNSs offer new structures and possibilities for changing patterns of political participation and influencing political processes. In particular in Western democracies, where scholars are concerned with a decline in political participation, the Internet seems to hold hopes for increasing political engagement and strengthening democracy. Nevertheless, it is yet unclear to what extent these new opportunities for political participation are realized and in how far those are affecting political processes in reality.

Existing literature and research have focused mostly on political participation that occurs in the so-called offline world, and some have started to include online activities. However, little attention has been paid to the relationship between SNSs and political participation, and the structures and opportunities they offer for new forms of political participation to develop online. In particular for the young generation, who is most active on SNSs, there seems to be “a gap between the opportunities to participate online and the degree to which young people take up these opportunities”.

Based on this, the question arises in how far Facebook is used for political activities and whether the use of Facebook is affecting behaviors of political participation. Facebook has played increasingly significant roles for political activities, for instance during the Arab Spring in 2011 or the U.S. Presidential Election in 2008. Considering its international popularity it has gained over the last years, also in political matters, it seems reasonable to further investigate the phenomenon Facebook and its relevance for political participation.

For that reason, a survey has been conducted concerning the use of Facebook and political participation of young adults. The empirical study is based on questionnaire distributed among Bachelor and Master students from Berlin and Cairo who have communication, marketing and intercultural studies backgrounds. The two cities have particularly been chosen because of their political relevance. Berlin is the German capital and the political center of Germany. Cairo is Egypt’s capital and was the focal point of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution which was part of the Arab Spring. Social media such as Twitter and Facebook have played significant roles in the revolution in Egypt and therefore it is interesting to examine the post-revolution use of SNSs for political participation of young adults from Cairo.

Concerning the academic background of the respondents, it is known from prior research that there is a strong positive correlation between education level and political participation. Furthermore, the studies background of the target group is relevant as it is more likely that they deal with different forms of communication. The respondents were between the age 18 and 28. This age group is significant in two ways: they are largely present on Facebook and they have a political relevance as they have certain political rights such as voting. Both in Germany and Egypt the voting age is 18. The sampling method used here was a combination of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. The questionnaire was given out during courses the respondents attended. This allowed for a relatively high response rate in a short time. In addition, a course has been selected that was only attended by guest students from Cairo. Overall, more than 100 respondents were asked. These data are included in the survey results presented here.

The results support prior assumptions that Facebook is seen as a useful tool for spreading and sharing political content but for political participation and real world politics not yet relevant,
because online activities must be transferred to the offline world to have a political impact. The technology and tools are given, but the effective use for political participation must yet to be learned by both citizens and political institutions.

References

Panel 4: Media Participation – Social innovation and civic resilience in times of crisis. (Room 123)

Panel organizers: Julie Uldam & Anne Kaun

The 2007/2008 financial crisis is still at the centre of public debates as one of the biggest challenges Europe has ever faced. The media play a central role in both representing and in facilitating responses to the crisis. This panel focuses on the latter from the perspective of media participation. Given the ubiquity of contemporary media, both online and traditional mass media, and their societal roles, media participation has the potential to influence possibilities for enacting, supporting and encouraging responses to the crisis. Media participation refers to situations in which non-professionals are involved in the production of meaning (Carpentier, 2011). Social innovation refers to collaboration between business, public bodies and civil society to meet social needs (Nicholls, 2006). Mediated civic engagement (Dahlgren, 2009) and mediated social innovation can serve as an influential way of coping with the crisis by sharing informational resources, and coordinating self-organisation as well as granting a voice to vulnerable groups in mainstream discourses on the crisis. More specifically, this can include community-driven or non-profit/profit organisation of upskilling or child caring, information about local food alternatives, or banking advice. This panel discusses such responses as civic resilience and investigates how citizens demonstrate, support and encourage resilience during the financial crisis through media participation. More concretely the following questions are addressed:

- What are the democratic implications of new forms of organizing to meet social needs as responses to the crisis?
- How is civic resilience represented in the European press?
• How is civic resilience played out with the help of networked communication premised on a decentralised coordination of collective action devoid of the stewardship of social movement organisations?
• How do citizen groups employ protective strategies for self-preservation (e.g. the rise of populist groups and discourses) as a type of coping mechanisms in times of crisis?

**Dan Mercea: Civic Resilience Without Organisation: Social Media in the Stop-ACTA Protests**

In the current political climate marked by deep economic transformation, social upheaval appears as a common avenue for voicing angst and opposition to austerity and the retrenchment of the welfare state. Street protests have swept the European continent from Greece to Spain, Bulgaria to the UK. Not least, such protest has been directed at containing an increasingly pervasive and democratically unaccountable commercial encroachment on digital information and communication, as witnessed in the cross-national mobilisations against the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (henceforth ACTA). Coterminal with this upsurge are indications that political protest is witnessing a transformation in its structure and scope on the back of a complex mediation of participation with social media. Research on the Occupy encampments, los Indignados in Spain and on the Arab Spring converges on the proposition that digitally-networked communication feeds into mobilisation and coordination routines many of which no longer underpinned by an organisational backbone. This paper will gauge the extent to which networked communication enables renewed civic resilience premised on a decentralised coordination of collective action devoid of the stewardship of social movement organisations. To that end, data are examined which were collected on Twitter (19,000 tweets) and Facebook (4,309 posts) two weeks prior to the final pan-European anti-ACTA demonstration on June 9, 2012.

**Julie Uldam & Anne Kaun: Civic resilience, social innovation and implications for democracy**

Civic resilience is key to responses to crises beyond protest and fatalism. Resilience invokes an ability to deal with adverse situations and to develop ways of sustaining communities, their people and infrastructures, in situations of crisis. Increasingly, citizens are moving away from traditional forms of organising and sharing resources (e.g. trade unions) to community-driven initiatives to meet social needs that have been augmented or made more acute by the crisis and ensuing austerity measures. At the same time, European governments are increasingly promoting collaboration between business, public bodies and civil society in response to budget constraints brought about by the crisis. In doing so, they adopt a resource perspective civic engagement, calling for citizens (including ‘corporate’ citizens) to volunteer social services – on market terms rather than community-driven initiatives.

This raises questions about the preconditions and consequences of approaching citizenship as a resource, and how a shift of responsibility from the state to civil society can be made possible in sustainable, environmental, social and economic ways.

This paper explores these questions specifically in relation to the role of online media technologies in facilitating civic resilience and social innovation by providing platforms for sharing advice in a time of increased distrust in political and economic institutions. In doing so, the paper analyses empirical examples of uses of social media in civic and social innovation initiatives in Scandinavia as responses to the crisis.

**Maria Kyriakidou, Max Hänska & Jose Olivas Osuna: The Indignados in the European Press.**

First emerging as a series of demonstrations in Spanish cities in 2011, the movement of the Indignados soon became emblematic of civic resistance against the economic crisis in Europe and the global financial forces that are at the root of it, inspiring and giving its name to similar social movements in Greece, Portugal, France and Italy. It therefore became a European symbol of social
solidarity and resistance. At the same time, however, and as the Euro Crisis persists and economic and social conditions in Europe deteriorate, the Indignados have also been critically discussed as illustrative of the utopia of direct democracy and the futility of social rage against the political and economic system.

Drawing upon an empirical study of the national press in Spain, Greece and Germany, the present paper discusses the role of the media in reporting and framing the movement of the Indignados in Europe. In specific, the research aims at identifying national similarities and differences in the ways the demonstrations were represented in the press, focusing on questions of advocacy and agency attributed to the movement and its purposes over different periods within the Euro Crisis. It will thus illustrate how the narrative of the Indignados as a form of civic resilience and resistance has been constructed in European media.

Tina Askanius & Yiannis Mylonas: Far-right responses to the crisis in Scandinavia.

As the crisis maintains its grip in European countries, xenophobic populist parties and neo-fascist groups thrive across the Eurozone. In the Scandinavian context, the crisis is considered a threat to a welfare system based on cultural homogeneity and closed national policies. These ruptures in the protectionist social institutions of the Scandinavian welfare societies have triggered fears of immanent dangers; “the remnants of the social state are considered as privileges that need to be defended against intruders and strangers” (Bauman, 2004), widespread feelings of social pessimism, and an advent of cultural racist discourses, “reducing the threshold of racist speech in the public sphere” (Lentin and Titley, 2011: 140). Drawing on a discourse-theoretical framework this project examines how political groups and networks in Denmark and Sweden such as ‘Danish National Front’, ‘Nordfront’, ‘Swedish National League’ and ‘The Swedes Party’ respond to the crisis as an opportunity to fuel anti-immigration discourses and prey on the sentiments of instability and insecurity in the population. This paper focuses on how these citizen groups and activist networks engage in different discursive strategies of ‘othering’ based on scapegoats and national stereotypes as ways of understanding and coping with the perceived threats of the crisis.
Panel 5: Political participation and national contexts. (Room 115)

Ursula Maier-Rabler, Paul Murschetz & Stefan Huber: ICOPS: Innovative Civic Online Participation Spaces. New approaches and comparative analyses in e-participation research: the cases of Austria and Slovenia.

Research problem – ICOPS is a comparative research project initiated by an Austro-Slovenian research consortium in the field of e-participation innovation research. It examines self-organized innovative practices of civic online participation and analyzes their ecosystems and impacts on formal political culture and society in comparative cross-border case-study research design method. ICOPS are digitally-mediated, ICT-enabled, bottom-up, citizen-driven, informal e-participation spaces in civil society. While government-driven, top-down spaces of e-participation have been studied extensively the ecosystems and impacts of ICOPS have not yet been examined. Argument – We believe that ICOPS are vital for safeguarding the vitality of democratic future developments across borders in Europe. We argue that ICOPS have the potential to counter declining public confidence in formal politics and to foster social inclusion and political participation. ICOPS lead to more pluralistic democratic futures within Europe and beyond. However, their success will much depend on contextual factors, value systems and ICOPS self-legitimation policies, and information and participation cultures.

Theoretical framework – ICOPS builds on new approaches in information culture theories, research in ICTs for democratic development, grounded theory, and concepts of social innovation. Information culture theories connect value systems relating to open access to information, transparency, participation, education, and communication to democracy, ethics, and legal systems and allow insights into differences regarding democratic practices (Inglehart & Weltzel 2005, Harrison & Huntigton 2000, Hofstede, Bjondeberg & Madsen 2009).

For ECREA, ICOPS will focus in the role of collaborative web 2.0 technologies, with their potential for forming networks, activating users in decentralized and authoritative decision-making processes of ICOPS activists. Based on the social shaping of technology perspective (Lievrouw & Livingstone 2002, MacKenzie & Wajcman 1999, Williams & Edge 1996), it is argued that the interrelationship between society and politics as a subsystem of society, information cultures and technology can limit or enhance e-Participation. The informed society is the precondition for participation and the Internet can function as an information source. As a communication medium it allows different forms of communication. Although the relationship between information and participation remains unclear (Polat 2005, p. 436), information is necessary to make informed decisions and to engage into political discussion or deliberation. The information seeking process changed considerably with ICTs in general and the social web in particular. However, e-Participation and grassroots democracy are not determined by technology design, but are much more closely related to their socio-cultural value systems. ICOPS aims to additionally analyze e-Participation within the context of information cultures (Maier-Rabler 2008) as one aspect that can either enhance or hinder online participation. Methodology – ICOPS will apply a multi-method research design drawing on qualitative and quantitative research methods such as representative online surveys, literature reviews, case studies, qualitative interviews, action research, and participatory observations. For ECREA, we will provide a detailed sketch of the entire research agenda and design. Further, ICOPS will offer these chosen methods for discussion.

Case study focus – The conditions for democratic participation, citizen involvement and participatory practices differ considerably between countries, political systems, and democratic cultures. Most studies in comparative democracy research focused on differences between old models of democracy, be they Anglo-American, continental European or else, and new democratic realities. ICOPS is innovative and will demonstrate both substantial differences and similarities even between two small-sized European neighbor countries: Austria and Slovenia. Comparative research between neighboring states encourages mutual learning and understanding of ICOPS as they contribute shaping the political, social and cultural DNA across neighboring borders. Notably, ICOPS will synthesize the similarity/difference dialectic through comparative perspective. By this, ICOPS
establishes bridges of understanding between two democratic models of both proximity and distance. Overall, the comparison of Austria and Slovenia regarding e-Participation areas, tools, technologies and practices allows highlighting empirical factors such as political culture, participative democracy, education, information cultures, and, importantly, to build ICOPS-theories based on grounded theory methods.

Expected results – ICOPS first results are scheduled to be presented on time for the publication of the conference proceedings.

References:

Dina Vozab: Disaffected citizens in Croatia: Analysis of sociodemographic and media use influences on political participation in Croatia.

The aim of this paper is to analyse those who abstain from political participation in Croatia in terms of socio-demographic characteristics and media use. National media systems are important factors in explaining differences in news consumption and political knowledge between countries. Research in Croatia will serve as a case study of how a changing media environment interacts with political participation in a post-socialist political culture. Drawing primarily on the research made by Blekesaune, Elvestad and Aalberg (2012) in their article “Tuning out the World of News and Current Affairs—An Empirical Study of Europe’s Disconnected Citizens”, I will describe the abstainers and show what socio-demographic and media use factors are influential in predicting political participation in Croatia.

Mohamed Anouar Lahouij: Political participation in Tunisia after the big success of social networks: yet the inequalities?

The goal of our research is to explore the attitudes, motivations and behaviors of Tunisian users about their interests and political information through Facebook, to gain a thorough understanding of the role of social networks in the Tunisian political scene.

In this article we will try to test our hypotheses on the basis of the survey conducted in 2012 that I realized during the preparation of my PhD thesis, a representative sample of 1450 Tunisian people, a study is made of the differences socio-economic status and other characteristics, as well as between those involved in the use of social networking sites and those involved through more traditional methods.
Todd Graham, Daniel Jackson & Scott Wright: Online third spaces and political action: not just talking the talk?

This paper takes forward a ‘new’ agenda for online deliberation that argues scholars need to use more inclusive definitions of politics and deliberation, and look for political talk beyond formally political online environments (such as government sponsored forums and political party websites) and into online ‘third spaces’ where it would appear that the vast majority of political talk occurs (Wright 2012a,b; Graham and Wright, 2013). Third spaces are non-political online environments, such as a cookery discussion forum, where everyday political talk emerges (see Van Zoonen 2007; Oates 2009). Such talk is a: “fundamental underpinning of deliberative democracy. Through everyday political talk, citizens construct their identities, achieve mutual understanding, produce public reason, form considered opinions, and produce rules and resources for deliberative democracy.” (Kim and Kim, 2008:51) Similarly, Coleman argues that: “politics [is] an outcome of everyday communication rather than its structural constraint.” Such an account, in the vein of Dewey (1927) “seeks to place the narrative of politics within the mundane, micropolitical practices of everyday life”, what Habermas (1997) describes as the “unsubverted circuits of communication”. Such an analysis opens up the space for political activities beyond the official, defining the public sphere in terms of “its proximity to everyday experience rather than its embeddedness within official centres of power” (Negt and Kluge 1993). It is, thus, central to the conference theme: it treats the “common deliberations, decided primarily by persuasion” that have “tended to fall more into the bailiwick of political theorists, ethicists, and scholars who study the construction of norms” to detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis.

In this paper we draw upon a longitudinal qualitative and quantitative content analyses of three popular, general interest UK-based forums over the course of three years (2010-2013): www.netmums.com (8.3m posts), www.digitalspy.com (66m) and moneysavingexpert.com (32.7m).

We examine under what circumstances everyday talk becomes political, what topical discussions this is related to, and how citizens ‘do’ such talk (their communicative styles). We find that 45% of threads that discuss politician issues began in sub-forums that were not about politics. Secondly, whilst the primary communicative styles were arguing and debating we find these forums to have a strong community and social function, as there was significant evidence of community building and social bonding behaviours. Furthermore, we address one of the shortcomings of existing research into third spaces and everyday talk: whether talk can mobilise citizens into various expressions of political participation, or whether it remains ‘just’ talk. We find that 32% of threads where there is political talk result in citizens referring to explicit political action: either a call to action or reporting an action they have taken.

We reflect on the findings in light of the on-going debates surrounding the nature of political engagement in the UK, and the role of the media and political communications in fostering a democratic culture.

Jeffrey Wimmer: “Third place reloaded? The case example gaming networks”

Digital games were traditionally seen as a new form of entertainment media that could involve considerably negative consequences. In contrast to these assumptions, recent studies show that digital gaming—because of its potential for interaction and interactivity—can be understood as a form of mediated communication having significant influence on everyday life and identity formation. Based on these findings, some authors claim that the mediatized “playgrounds” of online games have the potential to establish social capital, and hence provide an opportunity for social involvement and participation. The criteria established by Oldenburg (1991) to distinguish third places are used in this study to assess the suitability of online gaming platforms (PlayStation Home, Steam, XBOX Live) as social meeting points. The results of the study show that several characteristics of real-world third places can also be found in the virtual space of these gaming networks. However,
this only applies fully to the criterion of a “low profile.” Furthermore, the analysis of the conversational behaviour makes clear that game-related topics have a distinct priority, yet private issues are not generally avoided. Due to the entertainment and profit orientation of the providers, online gaming platforms and their gamer networks can only be compared with real third places to a limited extent. Especially the appreciation of the communication atmosphere reveals room for improvement in several aspects. In real life, people maintain many weak relationships (bridging effects) and few strong relationships (bonding effects). This observation also shows up in the results of this research. The respondents establish social capital and, thereby, weak and strong relationships to other gamers in their gaming network. The number of friends and the used functions highlight that social interaction, right after gaming, is becoming highly significant as a preoccupation. Yet, they do support social interaction among their users and thereby provide a form of public value for the gaming community. For instance, 28.2% of all respondents rather, or strongly agree with the statement that they have already gotten to know other users in the network, who then helped them in real life (n = 1606).

**Stephanie Wojcik & Fabienne Greffet: Online political participation on “political” and “non political” spaces. Evidence from the French Presidential Campaign 2012.**

Political participation is often considered as an unclear concept since its content has progressively spread out to include more and more diverse activities (van Deth 2001), beyond the canonical definition according to which the influence on elections or the policy-making process is a crucial aspect of participation (Almond and Verba, 1963). In addition, political participation is no longer limited to institutionalized spaces, particularly online. That’s why digital political participation gives raise to lively debates. Some scholars simply do not consider political participation when based on socio-digital networks. For instance, Schlozman et al. (2010) consider that Facebook is a space where one can discuss politics with family and friends, rather than a space where politically-organized efforts to directly influence public authorities exist. In a similar way, Morozov (2009) uses the word of "slacktivism": to him, current forms of participation on digital networks do not have any political consequence. They mainly result in a false feeling of usefulness and some psychological comfort for internet users. And online activism can have deleterious effects because it releases people from making costly and time-consuming efforts to reach their political objectives. Conversely, other researchers argue for a very broad definition of political participation based on digital modes of expression or action. For instance, Monnoyer-Smith mobilizes some cultural studies approaches to propose a definition of participation in terms of "digital culture". Advocating a broader definition of participation, different from the one in the activism field, she views participation as an essential component of any form of mediation in the digital society (Monnoyer-Smith, 2011). Between these two poles, Michael J. Jensen et al. (2012) consider that existing modes of offline participation (e.g., petition, donation,...) can be transferred online. In addition, digital media have created new venues for political participation that did not exist before: people can use the web to diffuse their own political views, upload videos with political content on YouTube, or join political groups through social networks. Therefore, it is the very notion of "politics" which is questioned, in a sense that institutional arenas appear neglected in favor of spaces of digital sociability, where people talk about politics, and sometimes organize political action. As a consequence, some authors plead for seriously taking in consideration "online discussion spaces with a primarily non-political focus, but where political talk emerges within conversations." (Wright, 2012).

This paper would question the concept of online political participation, particularly, its content and the meanings it takes for a set of Internet users who have “participated” online during the last French presidential campaign. In this perspective, we would first analyze what these users declare about their involvement in "official" online spaces, i.e campaign devices implemented by political parties and candidates. Then, we would study whether spaces for digital sociability, not controlled by political parties, such as personal Facebook pages, have also provided support to their political expression and activism.
The aim is firstly to determine whether private arenas are ideal spaces to take part in politics - as a part of the literature leads us to consider - and more generally to campaign, and secondly if any relation between institutional and non-institutional spaces can be observed. In particular, we would consider if these users maintain some kind of relationship with traditional forms of activism, within parties and trade-unions.

Our methodology is based on a survey carried out after the second ballot of the French Presidential election 2012, with 817 French internet users who took part in the campaign, as well as semi-structured interviews and focus groups with about 40 of them.

References:
Panel 7: Gendered participation. (Room 115)

Tonny Krijnen: Whose technology? Gender and online fan-art.

With the convergence of mass media, the concept of the active audience has changed rather dramatically. While active still refers to its original meaning of interpretation of the text and the negotiation between text and reader, active has also come to refer to ideas such as the ‘prosumer’: the consumer who produces something - a piece of art, writing, poems, videos, music - inspired by what was consumed. Famous examples are of course set by Henry Jenkins in his discussions on fan fiction, but also other forms of fan productivity can be found such as fan-art (art works created by fans about favorite TV shows) or fan-trailers (trailers of movies that will be made but are not made yet).

New technologies make it immensely more easy to not only produce different fan works, but also to publish these works. While many academics have devoted their time to fan, fan communities, reasons for individuals to join, there is less work that focuses attention to questions directed at who produces fan art, why do fans publish their work online and how technologies seem to form an important part of contemporary fan productivity. This question is nevertheless essential, since (new) technologies are neither equally used nor accessible to all. As technology has always been gendered in one way or another, new technologies and the increasing convergence of mass media cause fan production to have a specific, but implicit gendered dimension.

In this study the focus lies with the gender dimension of the social shaping of technology, or in other words who produces what, how and why and how gender is tied to the answers to these questions. Based on oral and written interviews with fans who produce a variety of works this study aims to look into how technology is gendered and what kind of importance this genderedness has for the prosumer.

Six people who produce fan art inspired by the TV series GLEE and six people who produce fan art, among which fan trailers, inspired by the book 50 Shades of Grey were interviewed for this study. Half of the interviewees agreed to be interviewed face to face using Skype, the other half preferred to be interviewed via email. The oral interviews were transcribed. All interviews were analysed using an approached based on grounded theory, employing the three coding phases, open, axial and selective coding.

The results of the analysis indicate that gendered character of technology itself is part of the explanation of gendered differences in who produces what kind of fan art and why. I will argue that old articulations of gendered technology are reiterated by new technologies and have important repercussions for who produces what in the world of fan art.

Sander de Ridder & Sofie van Bauwel: Intimate storytelling as a popular media practice in social networking sites: Challenges for intimate citiezenships in everyday mediatized youth cultures.

Intimate storytelling as an everyday socio-cultural practice is known in sociological literature to give meaning to gendered, sexual and relational practices in the everyday life-worlds of people. Strongly embedded within flows of power, intimate storytelling as a practice can teach us a lot about the hegemonic organizations of intimacies in particular cultures. Moreover, observing intimate storytelling practices can help us to define challenges for the continioud need for a wider 'intimate citizenship', which we define as 'the rights to choose what we do with our genders, eroticisms, bodies, feelings, identities and our representations.' (see Plummer, 1995).

This particular contribution will report on empirical insights from a four-year research project inquiring intimate storytelling practices among young people in popular social media websites. Thereby, we focus on two particular research questions; (1) how can we understand the social and cultural organizations of intimacies in everyday youth culture as a media-related practice in social media, and (2) how does this relates to the wider mediatization of intimacy.
To answer these questions, we will rely on qualitative and interpretative research done in a particular Northern Belgium context among young people between 14 and 18 years old. In this presentation, we will report on a combination of two empirical inquiries, which are a participatory observation of 200 youngsters on the popular social networking site Netlog, and focusgroups with 51 youngsters. Further, as a contextualization, an in-depth interview with the assistant community director of the social networking site Netlog was added, in order to deepen the media-practice based research with significant political economic insights. Materials collected from the participatory observation, focusgroups and interview were saved in databases on which we conducted different phases of textual analysis.

In the presentation, we will unpack the complexity behind intimate storytelling as a media-related practice, by focusing on the underlying processes such as technology, participation, representation and subjectivity, and actors who are involved in the mediation process; which are media institutions and audiences. Thereby, we will argue how the mediation in social networking sites works as a transformative process, which adds complexities to intimate storytelling in youth cultures, particularly in relation to the hegemonic and normative meanings attached to genders, sexualities and relationships. The focus will be on how we see an intimate citizenship threatenend in popular online social media places.

Taking a look at the wider mediatization process, which is the second research question of the presentation, will make a contributing conclusion to how we could think of living our everyday intimate lives with an increasing presence of digital and interactive media applications. Thereby, we will argue that intimacy in current youth cultures, is inextricably intertwined with (digital) media culture. Despite threats for intimate citizenship, technologies and opportunity structures for participation within this intimate digital media cultures hold significant emancipatory potential that is in urgent need to be activated.

\[
\textbf{Núria Araúna, Iolanda Tortajada & Cilia Willem: Readings of new femininities and masculinities in music videos.}
\]

This study examined how 45 young people read two music videos (Madonna’s Take a bow and Lady Gaga’s Paparazzi), with the aim of gauging their engagement with gender issues and representations. Media are key sites in the definition of sexual conduct, setting the rules of play (McRobbie 2004). In this context, post-feminist ideology is changing female representations on the media, stressing their sexual subjectivity, emphasising natural sexual differences, and promoting individualism and consumerism (Gill 2007, McRobbie 2006, Tortajada and Van Bauwel 2012).

Previous research has shown that in the frame of complex media representations of gender identities and relationships, especially teenagers feel actively engaged in judging TV characters and situations (Buckingham and Bragg 2004, Moran 2003). However, what is at stake is their possibilities to challenge hegemonic or ‘dominant’ representations and deconstruct gender identities aired by the media. Personal experiences may counteract those hegemonic readings (Moran 2003) but, still, as Buckingham (1993) points out, resistant readings won’t necessarily have political content and, if they do so, they won’t necessarily be progressive nor supersede fixed gender positions (Buckingham 1993) or challenge traditional gender stereotypes (Ging 2005).

Interpretation is related to sociocultural factors (Liebes and Katz 1997), with the subculture and privileged codes in the reception context (Morley 1996), as well as psychological aspects such as identification, recognition and evaluation (Livingstone 1990).

Method: In order to gain insight in young people’s readings of popular culture products, two music videos were selected for analysis: Madonna’s Take a Bow and Lady Gaga’s Paparazzi. In the first, a more traditional woman (waiting for a man, suffering for love….) is portrayed together with elements of sexual agency (self-satisfaction). The male character is the typical latin macho (torero). In the second video Lady Gaga, who was thrown off a balcony by her boyfriend, comes back for revenge. 45 people between 19 and 31 years old took part in the study (23 female, 22 male). After watching the videos together, they were asked to individually answer a range of questions covering the topic
of the video, their degree of identification and pleasure, and issues specifically addressing gender representation and relationships.

Adapting Hall’s (1973) concepts, we understand hegemonic readings as those interpretations that omit the gender dimension of the videos, negotiated readings as those interpretations that acknowledge the gender dimension but deny elements of inequality, and oppositional readings as the more critical interpretations that recognise the gender factor and raise the issue of inequality and violence that appear in the scripts.

Results: A first result is that of 45 participants, only 15 had seen Lady Gaga’s video (2009). Despite the fact that we did not expect many participants to have seen Madonna’s video (released in 1994), actually none of them had. This shows a disaffection towards the figure of Madonna, as a star from a previous generation.

As to the decodifications, we found a number of ‘aberrant’ readings (Eco, 1965) of Take a bow. However, its features of men and women are clearly identified by participants as ‘traditional’ (acknowledgement of the latin macho and the suffering woman), expressing certain negotiated readings. But in the end it comes down to a hegemonic reading of a ‘love’ relationship based on suffering and power games. The sexual agency of the female character is denied or overseen by most participants.

In Paparazzi we observed more negotiated and oppositional readings, as participants had a critical view on the story and the main characters. However, results show that participants were more critical about Lady Gaga’s vengeance than the actual reason why she takes revenge (being used and thrown off a balcony).

Panel 8: Populist radical right parties and expressive culture: moments, sites and practises of political struggle. (Room 123)

Panel organizers: Benjamin De Cleen (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) & Torgeir Uberg Nærland (University of Bergen)

This panel investigates the interactions between (populist) radical right (RR) political parties and expressive culture. It asks how various forms of expressive culture historically have been and presently are being engaged to both promote and oppose RR politics. The revival of the radical right – in a new and contemporary form – has since the early 1990s and up until the present day attracted considerable academic attention. Although a significant contributing force in the mobilisation for and against RR politics, expressive culture’s relation to the radical right has received only scant attention. Political science and sociology, with their strong electoral focus, have usually limited their attention to the electorate of the RR, often explaining radical right electoral success through macro socioeconomic and sociocultural developments whilst ignoring the agency of RR parties (e.g. Betz & Immerfall 1998; Kitschelt & McGann 1995; Ignazi 1992). More recently, attention for RR party programmes and party leadership has grown (e.g. Carter 2003; Eatwell 2003; Mudde 2007; Rydgren 2007; Schain et al 2002), but the focus remains firmly on traditional political actors and forms of politics. Discursive approaches have contributed significantly to knowledge about PRR rhetoric (e.g. Wodak et al. 2013) but here too, attention to the role of expressive culture in the struggle for and against the PRR has been rare.

Cultural and media studies have focused on the broader ideological-political aspects of culture, rather than on the manifest intersections between expressive culture and politics proper. More specifically, little attention has been given to how expressive culture has been mobilised by, for or against RR political parties. Existing work has focused mainly on the role of expressive culture (mainly
Referring to mainstream music (e.g. Brown 2004; Langebach & Raabe 2009; Shekhovtsov 2012), this paper presents a cross-European look at how particular forms/genres of expressive culture are aligned with RR parties, how the RR opposes certain other forms/genres of expressive culture, how artists engage in the struggle against or for the RR, and how certain forms/genres of expressive culture become the object of struggle between the RR and its opponents.

The papers each present empirical research that pays particular attention to:

1) how the aesthetic characteristics (e.g. genre) of expressive culture gain significance in the political struggle,
2) the ways in which expressive culture relates to more traditional forms of political intervention, and
3) how the media become a site and a means for (strategic) interaction between cultural and political (radical right) actors.

**Fabian Virchow: Visualized Racism in Europe: Far Right Graphic Novels and Comic Strips.**

Although devaluated as ‘American Trash’ for decades, far right political parties have made frequent use of graphic novels and comic strips in more recent times. The Austrian ‘Freedom Party‘, and the ‘National Democratic Party of Germany’, to name just two, have produced entire graphic novels in order to reach a young audience familiar with this genre and have made comic strips a regular part of their party publications. These publications and their racist and anti-Semitic content have yielded considerable criticism and uproar, and have furthermore hit mainstream media headlines as well as directing public attention to both its producers and distributors. This paper will offer basic information on graphic novels and comic strips as an increasingly significant form of expressive culture which is now also used by the political far right; furthermore by referring in more detail to recent examples it will outline how the visual and textual elements of the graphic novels and comic strips relate to ongoing debates about issues of migration, integration and conflict in a particular society on the one hand, and to the very basic world view and political rationale of the far right on the other hand.

**Nigel Copsey & Matthew Worley: The British Far Right and ‘Youth’ Culture.**

This paper will examine the relationship between British far right parties and aspects of British youth culture from the 1970s to the present day. It will begin with a historical analysis of British Movement and National Front attempts to recruit and mobilise particular milieus of inner-city white working class youth in Britain. Attention will be paid to the association of far-right politics with the skinhead subculture and the emergence of ‘white power’ music in the 1980s. In particular, it will examine how and why the aesthetics of that culture were colonised by the far right in pursuit of political gain and how young skinheads were used by the right in cultural and political engagement. The paper will then move onto the discuss more recent developments: the deliberate dissociation of ‘white power’ from far-right electoral parties (British National Party); the embrace of neo-folk as a more ‘respectable’ genre; and the appropriation of football ‘casual’ culture by Islamophobic street organisations, such as the English Defence League.

The paper will draw from primary source material, including both the media of the far-right and more mainstream media (music press, newspapers) into which the far-right incurred.

**Torgeir Uberg Nærland: Rapping Against the Populist Right: Hip Hop and the Norwegian Progress Party.**

Parallel to the growth of electorally successful populist radical right wing parties on the European continent Norway has for the past 20 years seen the rise of the Progressive Party (FRP), which today represent a considerable political force – currently being the third biggest party in parliament and in position to enter the next coalition government. At the same time the relationship between FRP and the cultural sector has been one of marked and persistent antagonism, centering around issues such
as immigration-, cultural-, and economic policy, and less explicitly also around matters of cultural taste and legitimacy. In this discursive struggle hip hop stands out as the artistic form of expression where critique of the FRP is most explicitly articulated.

Drawing on a range of original data sources, including survey-data of musical taste among politicians, interviews with rappers, musical analysis and analysis of media debates, this paper explores the role of hip hop in the discursive struggle against the FRP. Moreover, this paper discusses how the expressive and social characteristics specific to hip hop music and (sub) culture have gained significance in cultural mobilizations against populist right wing politics.

Benjamin De Cleen: Populist radical right party politics, nationalist civil society, and expressive culture: The Vlaams Blok/Belang and the struggle for the Flemish National Songfest.

The relations of the Flemish populist radical right party Vlaams Blok/Belang (VB) with mainstream expressive culture have been weak and antagonistic. Through its relations to the ‘Flemish Movement’, a network of Flemish nationalist civil society organisations, the party does have connections to the expressive culture of this Flemish nationalist subculture. This article zooms in on one of the main cultural-political Flemish Movement events, the Flemish National Songfest. VB politicians and militants as well as associations close to the VB are an important presence at this Songfest. As an event where Flemish nationalists meet, the Songfest has repeatedly been the object of struggle between different Flemish nationalist factions with different views on Flemish nationalism and on the role of the Songfest.

This paper presents a discourse-theoretical analysis of the struggle between the VB and more moderate Flemish nationalists as it was fought out around the Songfest in the period between the party’s foundation (1977) and its electoral peak (2006). It shows how the VB’s rhetoric is built around a radical and uncompromising nationalism that sees the Flemish Movement as the radical vanguard of the Flemish people and that treats political compromise as treason. To the VB, the Songfest needs to be a militant nationalist meeting and attempts to widen the appeal of the Songfest beyond the radical nationalist subculture are rejected as treason of the ‘vocation’ of the Songfest.
Gulum Sener Ulagay & Perrin Ogun Emre: Twitter as an alternative public sphere for feminist movements: The abortion law debate in Turkish twitter.

The evolving structure of social movements, especially after the battle in Seattle in 1999, has been meshed with the dynamics of cyber environment created by the Internet, having significant impacts on activism forms. Social movements find the opportunity to communicate and organize rapidly around social events thanks to their spontaneity. The discourses of protest and activism which are limited by power structures in the real world have been transported to the cyber environment in order to advocate their agenda through social media. Therefore, social movements which are adopting identity based politics and post-materialistic values aim to be more visible, and thus increase the potential of awareness.

Social media is used as an important communicative means for feminist movements. Since it creates an alternative expression and participatory space for socialization, social media allows digitally literate women to go beyond the scope of usual bounds and disseminate their ideas and feelings effectively. Social media becomes an important tool for reflecting the voices of women who live in countries such as Turkey where different forms of violence (physical, sexual, emotional and digital violence) against women are widespread. However, women’s use of social media has also been influenced by gender inequalities in patriarchal societies. The framework of this study will be limited to the use of social media as a new space where the alternative discourse(s) of feminist struggle has been produced against the dominant discourse. ‘My body, my decision’ is one of these discourses which protest the bio-politics acts of government. In this study, by referring to the Foucault’s biopower theory, the social movements’ (in this case, feminist movements) strategies to produce alternative discourses, contrary to the use of gender discourse by power structures (banning, ignoring, silencing, legitimizing and glorifying), and the role of social media as a new public sphere providing internet users to participate in this discourse will be examined. Concretely, this study will examine how the feminist movements use social media in order to produce alternative discourse in opposition to the ‘abortion law’ which can be considered as one of the control policies of the AKP, conservative Islamic-inspired government, over women body. Discussions around ‘abortion law’ have created a mass reaction by including not only the organized feminist movements, but also unorganized individual women. Dissident voices have been mobilized within the ‘No abortion ban’ campaign carried out on social media.

As a research method, all discussions in Facebook and Twitter around this ‘abortion law’ will be examined using content analysis research method in Turkey, Facebook and Twitter are most frequently used social media tools. We will investigate what alternative discourses have been produced against the government’s discourses over women body, how alternative discourses are circulated and disseminated in social media, who receive these messages, who takes the floor in discussions and in which subjects they negotiate or they conflict.

This study aims to respond to the following questions: ‘What is the rate of women participating in the virtual public sphere?’ ‘To what extent are alternative ideas produced in the virtual public sphere?’ ‘What are the opportunities of social media for producing new slogans in feminist movements?’ ‘What are the differences between virtual space and real space participation?’ In addition, in-depth interviews will be conducted, as a second method, with the representatives of feminist movements which play an active role in the abortion law campaign processes.
Elena Block: *The mediatization of politics in Chávez’s Venezuela: more voice for Twitter users or the echo of a top-down voice.*

This paper examines the mediatization of politics focusing on social media employing Hugo Chávez’s Venezuela as a case study. It explores Twitter as key space for mobilization, participation and voice. It asks whether the mediatization of politics and politicized use of Twitter may have resulted in more voice for ordinary users or whether such voice is only a perception belonging to the symbolic (ideological-subjective) dimension of politics. I argue that although Twitter constitutes a platform for political storytelling, expansion and mobilization of audiences, its users, rather than participating more, may end up echoing the voice of existing leaders and prolonging entrenched power relationships.

Chávez’s rule was embedded in savvy communication strategies; it displayed an unprecedented, even brutal use of media not only with power purposes but also to emotionally bond with constituents that not only felt represented but consubstantiated (or mimetized) with their leader. The visibility and meaningfulness drawn from this second-hand ‘participation’ showcases an empowering-disempowering dynamic through which the populist leader triggers feelings of political compensation and self-legitimation: the voiceless feel visible and participating, albeit symbolically, in the political process—the echo of an authoritarian top-down voice.

Various types of qualitative instruments are used to obtain the data: bibliographical documents; investigations on Twitter use in Venezuela; responses from 27 elite interviews conducted for my doctoral thesis; and my observations. The theoretical framework is based upon the application of a set of four theoretical themes: political culture, hegemony, mediatization and populism. This paper takes a culturalist approach, studying the topic in terms of culture and power, and acknowledging the role of human action.

I argue that the symbolic and hegemonic qualities of today’s media are crucial to understanding how contemporary citizens construct their reality and ideological environment (Bourdieu, 2003; Hall, 1985) by developing habits of connectivity with the various media technologies and forms at their disposal (Hepp, 2012; Block, 2013 forthcoming). This can be particularly so within “cultures of mediatization” (Hepp, 2012) such as Venezuela where citizens tend to engage with their political life via the media (España, 2009). Research by Delgado-Flores’s (Roche, 2013) has indicated the level of engagement of Venezuelans with social media: 40% of 30 million citizens use Internet, of which 8 million have a Facebook profile, and 4 out of 10 have a Twitter account; some of my respondents highlighted that Venezuelans’ main channel of connection with political issues is the media and particularly social media (Otero, Gomez, Rojas, Cabrera, personal communication, December, 2010). The data, however, raise questions as to the quality of such connection; whether it amounts to actual participation for triggering changes in society; or whether it could open the way for different political alternatives, leaders or agendas.

The polarization that has characterized Chávez’s Venezuela has been mirrored by a mediatic divide: while chavistas have tended to watch state-controlled media and followed Chávez and his officials on Twitter, opponents have watched commercial media, followed their Twitter spaces or those of anti-chavista top journalists. Chávez’s last presidential campaign (2012) was based on an intensive use of social media—a cancer stricken President communicated with voters, issued public policy and eventually announced new ministers via television and Twitter (Da Corte, 2012) where he came to have nearly 4 million followers (@chavezcandanga, 2013). Twitter also turned into a crucial communicational vehicle for the opposition candidate, Henrique Capriles, who reached nearly 3 million followers (@HCapriles, 2013): both transmitted proposals, mobilized and built links with their constituents via social media. But the verticality of this connection raises questions about actual interactivity via Twitter: are citizens really being heard?

Couldry (2010) has celebrated digital storytelling for its potential for participation, being heard, and having a say in society but he has also acknowledged the reproduction of power structures; as Hindman’s (2009) has indicated, new media has brought “an expanded role for political elites” (p. 139). The results of Venezuela’s 2012 elections substantiate this argument: Chávez was re-elected with 55% of the vote vs. 44% obtained by Capriles, figures that could be evaluated in proportion with
their Twitter followers: hence, instead of mobilizing new actors or issues, the social media hype just seems to replicate, or even freeze, already existing ones.

**Ann-Christin Nowak & Karoline Schultz: Enhanced possibilities of political participation within social media? Citizens commenting on politician’s Facebook profiles.**

With the emergence of social media like Facebook or Twitter new possibilities for a direct contact of citizens to their elected representatives emerged. The communicative spaces where people can talk about political issues are expanding (Dahlgren 2005: 152). People can engage in discussions in forums, send an email or interact on social network sites. Political participation becomes easier. Some argue therefore that the connection between citizens and politicians can be strengthened (e.g. Coleman 2004).

Since the last election in 2009 more and more German parties and politicians are active in social media with profiles. Nearly two-third of politicians from the German Bundestag have a profile in social media (see e.g. Meckel, Hoffmann, Bucher & Suphan 2011). With the new media spreading into all age-groups, citizens expect representatives who use social media to make politics transparent and to ensure a better mutual understanding. So they get the chance to communicate with politicians in a personalized, responsive, and dialogue-oriented manner. The non-hierarchical principles of this new communication environment might be challenging for politicians. Simultaneously they appear to be a chance to overcome the often lamented state of political alienation which affects the willingness to participate in public discourse – a substantive prerequisite for democracy. Of course, it would be idealistic to assume that each online conversation can become a thorough dialogue. However, initiating online discussions contributes also symbolically to politicians’ perceived responsiveness in society.

The study deals with the question which citizens go beyond a purely passive reception and participate in discussions on Facebook. Furthermore we tried to answer the question if, in comparison with findings about “traditionally” offline engaged citizens, the group of people who are politically engaged is enhanced.

Facebook is the most used social media platform by citizens and politicians. Therefore the study focuses on this platform. On Facebook citizens have a lot of ways to interact with their representatives. Beyond reading texts, they can like a posting (‘clicktivism’) or contribute to a discussion with a comment. With the help of a content analysis of randomly selected profiles (stratified sample according to level, political party) from politicians on regional and national level (n=60) from the German main parties (CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, Die Linke) we explored which users engage on politician’s profiles in Facebook. We analysed the last five commentators (n=285) commenting on the three most recent posts of the politicians. The study was conducted in September 2012.

The analysed commentators show similarities to characteristics (gender, age, political interest) of people who are offline engaged and do not resemble traditionally social media users (see Emmer, Vowe, & Wolling 2011). Users who commented on the politician’s profiles are mostly male, between 40 and 59 years old and highly politically interested. They are generally involved in political organisations or some in political parties. Most of the analysed commentators who publish information about their political orientation tended towards the party Die Linke and the Social Democrats. The discussion on Facebook can be described with the models of Freelon (2010) as communitarian. No real dialogue occurs (deliberative). People stay in homogenous groups and discuss with likeminded. Citizens tend to interact with politicians on their profiles which have the same regional background and belong to the party they support. Especially members and supporters of the liberal party (FDP) communicate only on profiles of liberal politicians. Users overall use Facebook mostly for positive feedback to the politicians and interact in a very personal way. Therefore one could say that this form of connection to politicians does not widen the sphere of participation, rather it resembles and complements traditional forms of participation.
Anna Kende, Adrienn Ujhelyi & Nóra Lantos: 2013 Student protests in Hungary: “Don’t just like it, organise it”.

University students in Budapest held an auditorium occupied between 11 February and 25 March, 2013 to protest against government policy on higher education. The auditorium was used for forums, while other demonstrations took place outside the university building all over the country supplemented by live internet broadcasting of the events, and debates in closed and open Facebook groups, blogs, etc. As one of the measures – prohibition of emigration after graduating from state financed programs – against which students protested was also included in the fourth amendment to the new constitution, student protests were closely intertwined with other anti-government political demonstrations.

Our research focuses on the period of the 44 days of the “First University Occupation in Hungary”, and other related protests to provide a case study about the dynamic of individual motivations, personality, online and offline activism in the different phases of the protest. Decades of research in the field of social psychology have confirmed that engagement in collective action and political activism is difficult to predict and is a relatively rare occurrence when compared to the level of grievances experienced by social groups. Politicized collective identity, cognitive evaluations, a constellation of both negative and positive emotions, such as outrage, anger, empathy, empowerment; the absence of strong fear, and shared ideologies are all prerequisites of engagement in collective action (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009). However, societal and contextual factors also shape actual activist engagements, and it is within this dynamic that all protests go through different phases.

Online activism - clicktivism or slacktivism - has elicited controversial responses from researchers, and although the negative effect or the substitution thesis lack convincing empirical evidence (Christensen, 2011), a general positive interaction cannot be automatically assumed either. Nevertheless, the internet and specifically social network sites can serve as the source of mobilization, empowerment (Nam, 2012), awareness raising, social involvement (Postmes & Brusting, 2002), and therefore altogether are a positive reinforcement to activism. Individual differences in social media use suggest that the effect of personality needs to be accounted for in order to reach a comprehensive understanding of the connection between online and offline forms of political actions. Research evidence shows that personality factors have a great impact on social media use: while extraversion and narcissism were positively related, emotional stability and conscientiousness were negative predictors. (Correa, Hinsley, & de Zúñiga, 2010; Hughes, Rowe, Batey, & Lee, 2012; Ryan & Xenos, 2011)

Our aim in this research goes beyond the comparison of the positive and negative sides of clicktivism: the restricted time frame of the student protests enables us to investigate how online and offline activism interact with one another and change in the different phases of the protest in light of individual motivations, personality differences, shared grievances, collective identities and ideologies of protesters.

Our questionnaire survey of student protesters and sympathizers (N=100) consisted of three main parts:

1. information on the frequency and types of actions the respondent participated in personally, and online engagement in the early, middle and late phases of the student protests;
2. questions about identity, ideology, motivations and emotions to explain why people engaged with this particular cause and, in these particular forms of action;
3. personality factors (BFI) to complement the profile of the protesters.

Our initial results suggest that different profiles can be created on the basis of individual differences in personal motivations and personality types which also explain the connection between online and offline forms of activist engagement in the different phases of the protest. In the early phases where participant numbers are higher, and both the online and offline activities are intense, differences in
motivations and personality have a weaker explanatory value: they mainly separate organizers from participants, rather than offline activists from clicktivists. In the later phases, as online activism starts to separate from actual physical participation, these individual differences in ideologies, identities, motivations, emotions and personality can explain why some protesters remain present only in the online world, while others continue their offline activities.

**Elisabetta Ferrari: (Social) Media for the 99%? Principles, practices and strategies of content production on social networking sites in Occupy Chicago.**

In this paper I investigate the relationship between contemporary social movements and social networking sites, by looking at the social media content production of Occupy Chicago during the protests of May 2012. Through a content analysis, I identify the most important functions that the social media accounts perform for the movement. My findings show a very limited importance of content that expresses the identity of the movement, spreads alternative news and criticizes mainstream media, while the preponderance of protest reporting content suggests that activists use social media mainly to inform the public of “what they do”, rather than "who they are". My analysis also finds significant differences between the content produced on Twitter and Facebook, thus showing the differences between the patterns of use on the two platforms. Furthermore, the social media production of Occupy Chicago seems to be mostly "event-driven", not just in the type of content, but also in its timing: 40% of the overall content of the month was produced during the four days of most intense protest; in these four days protest reporting accounted for approximately half of the overall content.

My analysis thus suggests that theories of alternative media should be rethought to account for the changed nature of Internet communications, the different needs of social movements and their strategic choices. While alternative media theories focus on the production of identity-related content, content that is meaningful mostly for the activists, Occupy Chicago shows us that activists of the web 2.0 think beyond the boundaries of their internal life and try to gain visibility for their movement by producing the kind of content that can become very relevant on social media. This of course changes the picture of alternative media production because it suggests that activists’ strategic considerations should also be taken into account and that they might actually be crucial determinants of the content that movements create.

Moreover, I argue that the individual-centric nature of social media clashes with the flexible, multiple, work-in-progress identities that coexist in the Occupy movement. Since its very beginning, Occupy acknowledged its open, unstructured, decentralized character and presented itself as an ongoing conversation about what is wrong in the political and economic sphere, rather than as a group organized around a specific manifesto. These choices, however, have not been translated in a consistent 'social media policy'; while using corporate platforms provided Occupy with the solution to some of their needs – access to the public and a reliable infrastructure – it did not give the movement any means to either promote its multiple and work-in-progress identities or to support processes of inclusive decision-making that could help them come to terms with such different identities. Thus I propose to approach the question of the interaction between decentralized practices, multiple identities and individual-centric social media from a different angle: how can technologies serve the political aims of a movement? How can the logic of corporate social media be made to support democratic and participatory efforts?

**Cayley Sorochan: Fantasies of Participation in the Quebec Student Strike and Occupy Wall Street.**

Over the past 15 years, interest in ‘participation’ as an ideal mode of social relation has proliferated across a wide expanse of cultural, economic and political spaces. The currency of the concept is in part related to the adoption of digital network technologies and the opportunities for interactivity and user-generated content that they enable. In a context in which participation is restructuring social relations in a variety of spaces that at the same time are not incompatible with the core
elements of capitalist exploitation, the status of participation as a radical concept must be interrogated.

The term ‘participation’ is attached to such a disparate set of contexts and practices that it would seem to hold very little meaning apart from the particular activities it purports to describe. Yet, no matter where it appears, participation consistently carries with it a positive connotation. In many cases, the positive connotation attached to participation implies that it is a good in itself, regardless of the nature of the practice we are encouraged to take part in. This ability to circulate widely and compel affirmative responses indicates that participation has attained the status of ideology. In this presentation I will examine participation as an ideological concept by mapping out the implicit values invoked by the term. The ‘participatory complex,’ as I define it, may include: a valuation of activity over passivity; the privileging of procedure or structure over ends; a desire for immediacy and anti-representational attitudes; the privileging of face-to-face encounters or bodily co-presence; an orientation towards inclusiveness and pluralism; a will to consensus; and discourses of empowerment through personalization.

In order to approach participation as ideology, I draw on the Lacanian psychoanalytic theories developed by Slavoj Žižek. Instead of delineating ‘good’ or ‘genuine’ instances of participation from those that could be considered false or inauthentic, I will argue that regardless of whether or not participation involves democratic processes it implies a particular structuring of enjoyment that maintains similarities across disparate practices. While ‘participation’ in the electoral system or reality entertainment implies very different practices and levels of control over a process than participation in an Occupy Wall Street general assembly, all three practices mobilize similar values in the construction of desire. What interests me in this presentation is not so much the concrete practices of participatory decision making, which vary widely and differ in effectiveness from context to context, but on the moments when participation is accepted as an ideology and the negative consequences this may pose for radical organizing at the level of political subjectivity.

With this in mind, an attempt to define a few essential characteristics of participation so as to fix its meaning from the outset, would be to miss the way it functions ideologically as a support for particular fantasies of the social. Instead, participation must include anything that names itself as such. It is the signifier itself that constitutes the kernel of the object’s identity. Approaching participation in this way will enable us to identify how our desire for it produces particular fantasy formations as well as particular symptoms.

In order to think through the ideological limits of participation I will present a comparative analysis of two contemporary political events: Occupy Wall Street and the 2012 Quebec student strike. In relation to other North American political movements over the past decade, both of these events have displayed periods of marked success in terms of massive and enduring popular mobilization. Both also involved participatory decision-making structures and were guided to varying degrees by participation as an ideological principle. Drawing on the values of the participatory complex, I will seek to articulate the particular fantasies of participation that fueled each of these events, along with their symptoms, in order to clarify the limits of participation as a discourse of radical transformation. In the case of Occupy Wall Street, I will argue that participation came to occupy the place of the fundamental political goal to the detriment of movement’s original motivations as a response to economic inequality. The result was a movement with an intense symbolic power, but an inability to mobilize an enduring organizational counter-power. In the case of the Quebec student strike, participation remained a core component of organization, yet at the level of ideology, it was overshadowed by the more substantial political goals of free, accessible post-secondary education and a more general critique of neoliberal austerity measures. The more highly politicized student movement was able to achieve real political concessions and expand its organizational and mobilizing capacities to enable long-term struggle.
**Panel 11: Participation in transnational context (Room B001)**

**Karoline Schultz & Marco Braeuer: The role of links between publics and the political system to overcome participation barriers – The example of two case studies on regional and transnational level.**

Political participation is a highly contested area: Commonly accepted as constitutive for democracy, the appropriate channels, the desired amount, and the legitimacy of its various forms (e.g. disruptive repertoires) are interpreted quite differently from the various perspectives of theories of democracy. Furthermore, citizens find themselves in a complex multi-layer network of opportunities and constraints when it comes to political participation, understood as individual and collective attempts to have influence on collectively binding decisions. Political processes often remain non-transparent and information is incomplete.

Traditionally mass media act as intermediaries to connect citizens with the political system. Many political issues need to pass mass media in order to be perceived as important and receive broad public attention (agenda setting). However, this vertical mass media selection process displays systematic biases (created e.g. by news values) that may lead to the marginalization of specific issues, actors, and opinions. This picture however is incomplete. In general, the public sphere is a societal process, where a variety of issues are being discussed in various sub-public spheres (mainstream, alternative, and counter publics) on different levels (local, regional, national, transnational), mediated (e.g. on social network sites) or non-mediated (at public discussion events). Hence, the selection of issues that require political decision-making can also happen horizontally: Actors can bypass mass media attention, and do not even necessitate mainstream news media reporting (e.g. pressure groups may gain influence on parliamentary opinion formation).

Aim of the paper is to present a framework that is capable of grasping the immense complexity of political decision making and its interconnections with different publics with the help of the dimensions of processes, levels, actors, and general conditions. Special attention is given to the links between (non-mass media) publics and the political system, where decisions are being prepared, negotiated and made. The presentation will deal with the question how these publics access the political process.

The utility of the general framework is illustrated with the help of two exemplary case studies. Both cases show the relevance of participation and public sphere before, during and after political decision making processes and point out the importance of specific characteristics of two different levels: (a) regional and (b) transnational.

(a) The first case study elaborates on the aspect of issues that are related to the implementation process of political decisions. Large techno-industrial infrastructure projects are often the result of a specific policy that provides opportunities for building such sites (e.g. wind farms, power lines). However, when they get built, these building sites often get places for political contention. With the help of data gathered with semi-structured interviews, conducted with anti-infrastructure protestors in three German federal states (n=25) it will be shown that protest is a strategy to create publicity for actors, interests, and opinions that were ignored in the decision-making process. Protest activities are the results of a lack of information and participation. The sample allows making a comparison of the influence of different general conditions (regional media systems, political power structures).

(b) The second case study deals with citizen participation on a transnational level during opinion formation and decision making. Due to the deficiency of European media, supranational organizations and a vital public sphere it is difficult for citizens to get involved in European decision making. The direct link to politics for citizens should be the European Parliament, because it is the only directly elected EU institution and should be accountable to the needs of citizens. The study deals with the issue how citizens get in contact with the MEPs and whether their interests are transferred into the political process. Furthermore it wants to point out the specific possibilities of online communication for an increased access of citizens to the political system. The study will present findings from 54 semi-structured interviews
with MEPs from 18 EU countries e.g. Germany, Greece. First pre-studies of the online performances of the MEPs showed that the expected possibilities to get in a dialogue are only used by a small number of citizens. Politicians are rather reserved in communicating on these channels. Nevertheless it is essential to know how these contacts can have an impact.

First results are expected in July.

**Aleksandra Vedernjak-Barsegiani: The use of new media in the transnational space from Georgia to Austria: Participation strategies of migrants in the context of intersectional violence.**

In my paper a transnational space opens up, which stretches from Georgia, a post-soviet multiethnic nation state up to Austria, a declining welfare state, asylum receiving country and rich EU-member with a rigid border regime. I will give a thick description of the use and reception of new media in everyday life of heterogeneous migrants from Georgia and will discuss the possibilities of political participation through creative-subversive strategies.

Georgia is a post-communist, multi-ethnic country that turned independent in 1991, facing a period of civil war and a recent armed conflict with Russia. In Austria, Georgians are a little noticed group and their asylum seeking numbers are declining. Of about 10 000 applications for asylum in the years 2000-2010 only four percent received a positive verdict (Statistik Austria 2011). What’s more, the Austrian government introduced countless amendments to law relating to aliens and refugees in the past few years. Risks and difficulties upon entry or exit of the country, on the (informal) job market and custody pending deportation have to be faced. Continuing with feminist research on violence, Birgit Sauer (2011) develops the concept of intersectional violence. She demands, that the violent structures of the social majority like foreign law regulations have to be examined together with inequalities between minorities and the social majority. Sauer localizes violence at the intersection of violence and structures of inequalities (51ff). In my ethnographical research I investigate violence at the intersection of gender, class, nationality/ethnicity, religion and residence permit status and I reflect the use theoretically.

I conducted a two-year-long ethnographic field study in Austria and in Georgia and documented the encounters with my informants of multiple belongings (Strasser 2009) in form of participant observation, biographical and informal interviews. Applying the method of triangulation (Flick 2011: 41f) my field data material is being confronted with legal texts and relevant studies of Austrian law and policy studies and studies concerning Georgia. My informants live as asylum seekers, students, au pair girls, family members of Austrian or EU-citizens or informally in Austria. They have to deal with their options concerning their residence permit status continuously in a new way and hereby develop forms of agency. In this trial and error of possibilities to gain a stable residence permit status creative-subversive practices are being developed; thus forms of resistant practices of a heterogeneous migrant group reacting to power structures of the nation state and the EU but also to experiences with the difficult transformation process in Georgia.

In my talk I focus on the relevance of new media when fighting for participation and agency. Giving descriptive case study examples, I will show which media (technologies) are being used, how gender roles are being reshaped and how digitally supported networks are being (re)constructed. The communication focuses – next to family and kin-like friends support – on insider knowledge about health systems, foreign law and custody pending deportation up to possibilities on the (informal) job market and the stabilization of residence permit status. Hereby the use of online-media such as Skype, a Russian speaking social network and mobile communication via SMS and prepaid cards play a big role. I look at the reception of Georgian TV-stations of the government and the opposition in the internet but also of European-American contents working on the question of reshaped gender roles and societal-cultural change. The question will be discussed, if the media use of migrants forms new ways of political action and public spaces.

Today, there is a general agreement that audiences play a crucial role in the communicative construction of public spheres (Dahlgren 2009; Lingenberg 2010). It is argued that everyday media appropriation is a crucial part of articulating public spheres. Accordingly, we cannot talk about the European public sphere, its specificity, or its legitimising role for EU politics (Hepp et al. 2012) without focussing on the people. Looking at the citizens’ everyday communication practices allows a differentiated understanding of how the European public sphere evolves and becomes constructed at local (and national) levels. Inspired by the concept of ‘public connection’ elaborated by Coulidy et al. (2007) we aim to reconstruct the citizens’ perspective on European politics and how this is related to their public connections. The analysis of public connection, thus, combines both forms of communicative access to the public sphere, which can happen through the media but also via communication with ‘informed’ people, as well as everyday conceptions of a ‘legitimate’ or ‘illegitimate’ Europe.

In our paper we present results from research into citizens’ (re)actions to the European public sphere in Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Poland and the UK. Beyond our fundamental focus on the European citizens’ public connections, we single out the citizens’ reactions to and constructions of the European and Greek financial crisis. Our research is based on qualitative interviews with 30 citizens per country, network maps (interviewees’ drawings of their communicative networks) and media diaries (interviewees’ documentations of their media use over a period of one week). The selection of our interviewees was oriented towards the model of ‘theoretical sampling’ as developed by the Grounded Theory methodology (Glaser/Strauss 1999). The interviews were transcribed and – together with the other data – analysed from a comparative transcultural perspective following coding procedures suggested by Grounded Theory.

We present our findings in two steps: First, we focus on citizens’ public connections and ask how these correspond to their legitimation projections with regard to Europe. Second, we elaborate transcultural patterns of citizens’ reactions to the Financial and Greek crisis. Finally, we conclude by integrating these results:

1. Across all cases and countries the analysis of citizens’ public connection depicts one fundamental finding: There is no causal relationship between ways people connect to the public and citizens’ everyday conceptions of a ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ Europe. That is, despite cultural differences in public connections and ways of legitimising Europe, people who intensively connect to the European public sphere do not necessarily support conceptions of Europe suggesting a higher level of integration (for example the ‘United States of Europe’ ). This finding allows for a more differentiated discussion of communication elites and their taken-for-granted support for the European project and integration.

2. Regarding the EU and Greek financial crisis, our analysis depicts two kinds of reaction patterns that are based on a broad public connection across all countries: First, people are struggling to ‘understand’ the crisis, a process that is marked by perplexity, anxiety, and speculations. At this point, our interviewees perceive the crisis as a serious and complex matter, they are worrying about effects on both their personal lives and the future of Europe, and speculate about the possible causes for the crisis. Second, the citizens develop their own view on how to ‘overcome’ the crisis, either in a national way, a European way, or by re-negotiating European cooperation. Whereas some interviewees propose national solutions, emphasising Greece’s national responsibility to solve ‘their’ problems on their own, others depict European solutions pointing to absolute solidarity with and financial help for Greece. A third way of overcoming the crisis is seen in a re-negotiation of European solidarity with Greece in the current crisis.
3. In the conclusion, we discuss our findings with regard to the Europeanization of public spheres and the possible emergence of a European political discourse culture in times of crisis. Moreover, we present general reflections on whether citizens’ public connections and participation in the crisis discourse is a problem for the legitimisation of the EU.

Panel 12: Mass media representations of protest (Room 115)

Manaf Bashir & Maria Fedorova: Pussy Riot: “A Voice of Dissent in Russia” or “Hooligans Motivated by Religious Hate”?

This study employs framing as its theoretical framework to determine any discrepancies in media coverage of the Pussy Riot issue. The authors conducted textual analysis of newspaper articles with some elements of critical metaphor analysis to uncover the American and Russian themes in regards to the feminist punk-rock band.

Julia Völker: (Mis)understanding conflicts – Resolution or Covering Variety? How the mass media cover the Stuttgart 21 conflict.

The new construction of the Stuttgart central railway station (S21) is considered the most controversial transportation project in Germany. For many years it has been accompanied by civic engagement turning into civil protest. As local government and Deutsche Bahn ignored these protests, the planning crisis caused by a huge cost increase escalated towards a political crisis (lack of democracy).

In communication science it is discussed, whether the media coverage takes the role of an observer who describes and represents the opposed positions towards S21 or whether the journalists play a partisan role by favouring a one-sided position (cf. author 2012). In the case of biased coverage a media crisis, too, may emerge (lack of variety in media coverage). A lack of variety in media coverage, in turn, may have an impact on the selection of information made by activists, politicians and recipients for everyday participation, engagement or protest (increase of digitally-mediated information sources, decrease of classical media).

From the perspective of conflict theory one may expect that the conflict widens in two dimensions: More aspects of the conflict issue are included and more individuals become involved in the conflict (which includes the media as observer). A normative approach would make the media responsible for escalating conflicts. Rather, a system theoretical approach (Luhmann 1995: 357-404) assumes the autonomy of systems, which implies that the media operate within their own logic and cannot be made responsible for the development of the conflict. The question comes up whether the mass media play an active part and are engaged in the conflict or whether they keep their autonomy as external (not necessarily passive) observers. System theory relinquishes strong normative presuppositions: It is not the task of the media to solve conflicts, rather they should or are expected to represent the variety of topics, positions and actors. Hence, the media should not be criticized if they hype the conflict (which may affect the escalation of a conflict) but if they fail to represent the variety of the conflict itself.

In order to test the system theoretical hypothesis of mass media autonomy a content analysis of the media coverage about the Stuttgart 21 conflict in local and national newspapers was carried out. The coding scheme consists of variables including the variety of issues as well as of the actors involved in the conflict.

In general, the results show that the media almost equally represent the pro and contra arguments towards S21. The arguments against S21 are slightly favoured. Not only is the argumentation balanced but also is the variety of arguments of both sides of the conflict almost the same (cf. table
1, appendix). This variety increases in the course of time by using more detailed arguments. However, differences between the newspapers can be identified: Liberal national newspapers and the local newspapers cover a higher number of different issues on average than the conservative newspapers; the local newspapers cover even more than twice as much issues. Though, the diversity measure of arguments suggests an overall balanced level (Simpson’s d=0.8) except within the range of the pro-argumentation of Süddeutsche Zeitung (Simpson’s d=0.34).

Yet, on the level of actors diversity in media coverage is largely restricted to prominent actors (Cramer’s V= 0.63, n=1,023 coded arguments), which can be explained with the news factor approach. Politicians (45 percent, n=1,023 coded arguments) are mentioned much more than any other actor. NGOs and activists, the parliamentary opposition and the media (if they are mentioned as actors) are most clearly against the project, whereas Deutsche Bahn, local companies and business and the government prominently promote the S21 project.

In sum, the results indicate that the media coverage rather represents the variety of the conflict events than is actively and one-sided involved in the conflict. Therefore from a system theoretical approach a media crisis may not emerge from a lack of variety in media coverage.

Bibliography:

**Panel 13: Impact on institutional politics (Room B001)**

**Filippo Trevisan: Mapping the ‘Search Agenda:’ A citizen-centric approach to ‘political’ information flows in elections.**

Online media have been credited with reducing the distance between citizens and politicians as well as augmenting the pace and frequency of communication between voters on one side and candidates on the other. However, studies of information flows in elections continue to focus primarily on official campaign messages, both online and offline. This paper argues that this approach seeks to apply traditional political communication research methods to new phenomena in a way that is at best restrictive and at worst potentially distortive. In a media ecology in which users have access to an unprecedented amount of information on virtually any topic, it is useful to ask instead whether voters are using online resources to break free of ‘information hegemony’ and create their own election agenda. As such, this paper discusses a new approach for capturing and analyzing search engine use in elections developed as part of a joint ESRC-Google knowledge transfer program. Understanding key online search trends in elections can help clarify whether citizens are truly becoming ever more disenfranchised from politics – as critical literature has long claimed – or instead they are following non-conventional paths to information, driven by their interests and escaping the influence of ‘staged’ campaigns. Using Google Trends data, key ‘search events’ (i.e. search spikes for election-related information) in the 2012 U.S. presidential election and the 2010 UK general election were identified and investigated in conjunction with relevant coverage from traditional news media and official campaign responses. Similarly to the way in which politically relevant discussions can take place inadvertently among unaware users in online third spaces, search trends revealed that citizens may in fact be more interested in politics than traditional research approaches have suggested, highlighting the need to redefine what counts as ‘political’ once information is released in the new online ecosphere.
Ilaria Di Bonito: From the square to the parliament: are social movements influencing the use of Internet in electoral strategies? A case study from Catalonia.

The relationship between social discontent and use of new media dates back to the “Battle of Seattle” of 1999 and proved to be strong during the years. Recently, this connection gained new attention in western countries thanks to social movements such as the Occupy Movement or the Indignados, which demonstrated that Internet, and in particular social media, can be a powerful tool of bottom up participation and mobilization. In this milieu of dissatisfaction against traditional mechanisms of democracy but increasing interest in new ways of political participation, parties are trying to get closer to citizen implementing new communicative strategies based on the use of digital media and 2.0 tools. But, is this shift just a mere façade or a real commitment?

The proposed case study is the analysis of the on line electoral campaign of two parties during the campaign for the elections to the Catalan Parliament of November 2012. The political arena was then dominated by two main issues: the crisis, with its related social tension poured out with the Indignados, and the pro-independence discourse, which had its peak during a massive manifestation two months before the elections.

Parties analysed are CUP and CiU. CUP is a small pro-independence left wing party, who was running for the first time in parliamentary elections. Really close to the social movements’ sphere, CUP has a bottom up structure and is very committed with the use of digital technologies. In contrast, CiU is the pro-independence right-wing party, in power almost continuously since the first democratic elections of 1980, who lost 11 elected members. During the previous electoral campaign of 2010 CiU ran a winning communicative strategy, making an intensive use of digital resources to reach its electorate.

The research is based on the analysis of the web pages and the Facebook and Twitter profiles of both parties during the two weeks of electoral campaigns. The sample is analysed within two theoretical frameworks. The first one is the dichotomy of the innovation vs normalisation effect of on line media on electoral campaigns. The second one refers to the trends of metacommunication, personalisation and negative campaign affecting the messages of modern electoral campaigns.

For the analysis I used:

- a set of 35 indicators grouped into four categories (Information Delivery, Participation, Mobilization, Interaction) to assess the structural features of the websites;
- a set of 6 indicators to assess the content displayed on the websites (the analysis is based on the main news posted on the home page every day during the campaign);
- a set of 14 indicators to assess type and content of the messages posted on Facebook and Twitter.

The objective is twofold:

- investigating to which degree and extent two different parties are using digital media and social network;
- assessing if the social demand for more political responsiveness and proximity and the advent of a new competitor influenced the electoral strategies of a big party as CiU, comparing current results with evidences from previous works which showed that, despite the appearance, in the 2010 campaign the most participative and interactive features of on line campaigning played a secondary role.
**Gulum Sener Ulagay, Beyrut Yıldırım, Safa Zengin & Haydar Özkömürçü: How does microblogging change traditional politics? TBMM (Grand National Assembly of Turkey) Deputies’ use of Twitter.**

The evolving structure of social movements, especially after the battle in Seattle in 1999, has been meshed with the dynamics of cyber environment created by the Internet, having significant impacts on activism forms. Social movements find the opportunity to communicate and organize rapidly around social events thanks to their spontaneity. The discourse of protest and activism which are limited by power structures in the real world have been transported to the cyber environment in order to advocate their agenda through social media. Therefore, social movements which are adopting identity based politics and post-materialistic values aim to be more visible, and thus increase the potential of awareness.

Social media is used as an important communicative means for feminist movements. Since it creates an alternative expression and participatory space for socialization, social media allows digitally literate women to go beyond the scope of usual bounds and disseminate their ideas and feelings effectively. Social media becomes an important tool for reflecting the voices of women who live in countries such as Turkey where different forms of violence (physical, sexual, emotional and digital violence) against women are widespread. However, women’s use of social media has also been influenced by gender inequalities in patriarchal societies. The framework of this study will be limited to the use of social media as a new space where the alternative discourse(s) of feminist struggle has been produced against the dominant discourse. ‘My body, my decision’ is one of these discourses which protest the bio-politics acts of government. In this study, by referring to the Foucault’s bio-power theory, the social movements’ (in this case, feminist movements) strategies to produce alternative discourses, contrary to the use of gender discourse by power structures (banning, ignoring, silencing, legitimizing and glorifying), and the role of social media as a new public sphere providing internet users to participate in this discourse will be examined. Concretely, this study will examine how the feminist movements use social media in order to produce alternative discourse in opposition to the ‘abortion law’ which can be considered as one of the control policies of the AKP, conservative Islamic-inspired government, over women body. Discussions around ‘abortion law’ have created a mass reaction by including not only the organized feminist movements, but also unorganized individual women. Dissident voices have been mobilized within the ‘No abortion ban’ campaign carried out on social media. As a research method, all discussions in Facebook and Twitter around this ‘abortion law’ will be examined using content analysis research method in Turkey, Facebook and Twitter are most frequently used social media tools. We will investigate what alternative discourses have been produced against the government’s discourses over women body, how alternative discourses are circulated and disseminated in social media, who receive these messages, who takes the floor in discussions and in which subjects they negotiate or they conflict.

This study aims to respond to the following questions: ‘What is the rate of women participating in the virtual public sphere? ‘To what extent are alternative ideas produced in the virtual public sphere?’; ‘what are the opportunities of social media for producing new slogans in feminist movements?’; ‘what are the differences between virtual space and real space participation?’ In addition, in-depth interviews will be conducted, as a second method, with the representatives of feminist movements which play an active role in the abortion law campaign processes.
**Sebastian Kubitschko: Emerging infrastructures of political participation.**

The paper will present findings from my qualitative research on the Chaos Computer Club (CCC) – Europe’s largest and one of the world’s oldest hacker communities. By doing so it will affirm the practicality and efficacy of a concept I propose throughout my presentation: information and communications technologies and infrastructures (ICTI). The research conveys the recent move towards the analysis of media related practices (Couldry 2012). By doing so it demonstrates that the conceptual strength of ICTI is that it allows us to look at a wide range of practices related to developing, utilising and maintaining ICTI – from complex technical challenges of keeping a wireless system running to updating website content, from programming to having an online chat. The findings of my research illustrate that three dimensions – acting with, through and about ICTI – are a vital part of contemporary political participation.

**Christian Schwarzenegger & Anne Kaun: Online disconnection and media (a)participation – Using forced disruption to investigate forms of media participation.**

In times when media are mundane fellows that are disappearing from our consciousness, when media usage is partly habitualised and therefore invisible, looking at disconnections rather than exclusively connection enables us to develop a deeper understanding of what it means to live in mediatised worlds. Media disconnection beyond digital divide and knowledge gap is, however, rarely addressed in current studies of mediatisation. Media studies quiet naturally pay more attention to new forms of mediated communication and to what people to when they make use of particular then new communication devices or infrastructures. Nordenstreng speaks of research that focuses too narrowly on the latest technological fashion endangered to suffer from the “Nokia Syndrome”. This is struggling to keep up with the pace of technological innovation driven either by fear of technological obsolescence for ones research (cf Postill) or by euphoria that the world has started anew with the latest development (cf. Wellman). We consider approaches that focus on the usage of media, and how media potentials exert influence on wider social and cultural processes important. Yet, we will argue that research that focuses on the use of media and the participation in certain formations of mediated communication alone, is likely to provide too narrow explanations for the questions observed. We will argue that a common misunderstanding of participation in mediated communication of today, is that everything necessary to understand participation is to be found in the participative action as such, and that understanding participative culture can greatly benefit from understanding those who do not participate. The following presentation is an attempt to investigate specific forms of disconnection in conjunction with connection enabled by media.

By using disruption of the daily stream of online engagement as a method, the presentation discusses how online disconnection can contribute to understanding of media participation and its role in the everyday lives of young adults. Media participation is here understood, following Carpentier, as practices of lay people using media technologies to engage in and with public discourses.

The pilot project is based on data that was conducted in three steps. Firstly, the participants – first year students at a German university - were asked to document their online practices during one week. Secondly, they were asked to abstain from using the internet for one week completely. During this week of abstention they were asked to reflect about difficulties and changes they notice in their everyday lives especially in terms of media participation. The third and last part of the project comprised an essay writing exercise, where the participants were asked to draw some general conclusions about their off-line week.

In the analysis, we show how conscious disruptions of habitualised media practices can contribute to an understanding of the role the internet-based media participation plays in the everyday life of
young adults. Forced disconnection provided clues for understanding what the non-/participation in online communication meant for the participants and how it affected them. Participation in online communication was mainly important for coordination and organization of everyday practices, to keep in touch with personal networks, friends and families as well as for entertainment purposes. News consumption, information seeking or even active engagements in an online-discourse sphere were rarely among the most common and most favored practices. In the stage of abstention the everyday organization and personal relations is also what the participants experienced as the most severe sacrifice, as they literally missed activities that were planned online. While they missed information, they were not so much missed by their online contacts and it was only a minor part of their networks that sought contact to them during the disconnection period, using alternate means of communication. While some experienced the offline period as some sort of relief, participants also tried to develop compensatory modes of communication. We thus learned which forms of participation and what purposes they considered most important or felt they could (not) easily do without. Hence, the project provides a theoretical and empirical investigation of forms of connection and disconnection that are persistent in mediatized worlds.

**Sören Reimer: Holding Congress Accountable: Public Interest Groups and the Office of Congressional Ethics.**

The proposed paper examines how public interest groups try to hold the United States Congress accountable by lobbying for ethics rules and enforcement. Specifically, the paper focuses on the case of the Office of Congressional Ethics, which was established by the House of Representatives in 2008.

The public discontent with the perceived lack of ethical conduct of Members of Congress has been a mobilizing force for numerous reform initiatives throughout the history of the United States. In the proposed paper, the work and constraints of public interest/good government groups that act on this discontent in the field of Congressional ethics is highlighted. The field in question entails the codified rules and standards that Congress enacted to prevent, for example, conflicts of interests of their members, as well as the mechanism of their enforcement. For most of its history, both chambers of Congress have relied on peer-review in enforcement matters, that is, only Members were authorized to investigated alleged misconduct of their colleagues and to discipline them. In 2008, the House of Representatives established the Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE) and introduced non-members into the process. The OCE’s role resembles that of a grand jury in the justice system. It is charged with initiating investigations of alleged misconduct of members of the House and recommends proper action to the House Ethics committee. The Senate did not establish such a body. A broad coalition of ethics groups lobbied the House to initiate the reform and thus the case offers an excellent opportunity to examine how these groups operate and what dynamics enable or constraint their efforts.

In the proposed paper, based on policy field analysis, I will argue three interrelated points: First, while opinion polls have registered a decline in trust in Congress over the last decades, the public interest in ethical conduct of members of Congress can be fairly described as diffuse, that is, not easily translated into specific policies by the public interest groups that act as aggregates for such interests. To mobilize the public in general or its members and activists, public interest groups utilize political scandals. However, in the case of the OCE, mobilization had its limits as public interest groups did not think that a fight for internal ethics enforcement rules of Congress would sustain a longer outside lobbying strategy.

Second, public interest groups that seek substantial reforms have to overcome strong counter-interests of members of Congress. Ethics rules and enforcement are considered by many members of Congress as a sensitive area of which outsiders have only limited understanding. Furthermore, the fear of politicization of the process as well as the partisan divide limit public interest groups’ ability to press their case. Rather, the case of the OCE indicates that an internal champion, namely the majority party’s leadership, is of paramount importance to initiate reform, grant public interest groups access to the policy process and secure passage of the reform measure. However, the groups
have some leverage as their endorsement of reform measures lends credibility to the politicians' proposals.

Third, the agendas of public interest groups usually entail a broad scope of issues, ranging from government reform and campaign finance to consumer protection as well as environmental protection. Thus, as resources are limited, congressional ethics is not by necessity a priority. In order to create synergies, various groups have joined into a “ethics coalition” that, as the case of the OCE indicates, is an effective tool for coordinating the individual groups efforts, but also creates challenges, for instance, when differences in policy outlooks arise.
Many thanks to our sponsors for supporting our conference!