Networked Publics in the Age of Hybridity

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Section: Political Network

Abstract:
The Panel aims to examine the application of social network analysis into an arena of political science – political interactions. Inspired by the thesis of hybridity and the networked publics, we seek to comprehend the functions of connectivity in public discourses. Today's political communication ecosystem is more than a convergence of offline and online: it is the transcendence into a new form of interactions by allowing for a rapid conversation on politics across multiple platforms with virtual proximities between the actors which support the transfer of cognitive and emotive aspects of politics.

Previous researchers open the floor to the discussion that recognises public spaces as the spatial imagination of representations and narratives on politics. A branch of interdisciplinary literature addresses the issue of discussing politics in social networking sites that allows people to work around physical barriers to interaction and reduces the cost of interacting with people in far-off places. Another stream of the studies, influenced by the relational paradigm of social science, identifies structured communication environments with no preconditions on the ways how platforms and/or group of communicators can be connected. It is however revealed that connectivity certainly influences the flow and the quality of the public discourses.

Still, there is a number of pressing needs for the empirical tests and data-driven examples to clarify conceptual and methodological directions of such networking activities in the realm of political interactions. For sure, the network itself does not determine the individual behaviour of the political communicators, the connectivity however has a significant effect on the discursive opportunity structure in politics. It might be true in another way around as well; the architecture of the communicative environment potentially shapes the actor's perspectives on their interactions. The one of the major limitations is the dominance of studies examining the Western Europe and the lack of comparative works. Our knowledge is also unsatisfactory concerning the mechanisms of networked political interactions.

Therefore, we search for the comprehensive assessment of networking activities in public spaces with close monitoring of the inhabitants' interactions incl. politicians, journalists, activists, experts, 'netizens' (citizens of internet) and any actors. With this in mind, we wish to unpack the different aspects of networked publics in the age of hybrid communication. Innovative methods and research techniques are particularly invited to be presented either from ego-centric or socio-centric approaches of network analysis in order to reveal the discursive architectures in networked publics. The question will also be addressed whether the complex relationships between the political actors support the Brants – Voltmert's thesis on 'decentralization' (2011), or it is better to assess the patterns of networked

interaction as manifestation of the fights for the dominance in the public discourses as it is discussed by Andrew Chadwick (2013). With this respect, we encourage scholars to submit reflections on the dismantlement of the old forms of communicative hierarchies and/or creating the new ones in the networked spaces. The Panel welcomes contributions that map various elements that determine the flow of political messages as well as investigations of viral politics and exploration of the network structures binding political issues, actors and discourses together.

If you have a Paper you think might fit in this Panel, please contact both the Panel Chairs before 31 January with the following information:
- Title of the paper (no more than 20 words)
- Abstract of the paper (no more than 250 words)
- Author's (and if applicable co-author's) email address as registered in their MyECPR account
- 3–5 keywords