

Workshop Proposal Outline form for prospective Workshop Directors for the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops

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Title of proposed Workshop:	Political engagement in the web.2.0 era. Co-production in election campaigning
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Outline of topic:	<p>Political engagement is at the center of political science research, especially concentrating on traditional and non-traditional web based forms of political participation. Debates are emerging surrounding new forms of participation offered by new digital wave era technologies, especially through the participatory opportunities offered by new communication platforms (such as social networks and microblogs). The US elections of 2008 and 2012 and Barack Obama's concentration on the interactive communication or citizen-led communication has led to new thinking around how political communication should be performed and studied.</p> <p>The aim of the workshop is to cover both aspects of political communication: the supply side - offered by political actors and the demand side – how audiences-citizens are interacting, or indeed want to interact with political actors. The workshop will focus on key questions arising from current studies. How do political actors communicate with their supporters and adversaries within the new communication environment created by platforms allowing for wide dissemination of information? Is there an emergence of new participation patterns among citizens or do digital technologies simply reinforce existing practices? Are traditional forms of political engagement challenged by new online participatory behaviors? Have any new forms of political engagement and participation emerged or are they just replicating longstanding paradigms? If new forms of engagement or participation are emerging, how can they be defined and measured, is the division between traditional and non-traditional, offline and online artificially sustained, or do they now overlap? Alternatively, are the new online engagement possibilities attracting different groups of citizens previously excluded?</p> <p>The workshops we propose will extend the discussion on the role of the Internet in the contemporary political sphere. We will explore whether access to the Internet, to both pluralist and polarized information, may facilitate political engagement, shape political attitudes and effect political knowledge, and what impact there is on information consumption, interest in and engagement with politics and political participation. We will extend academic understanding of existing theoretical and empirical debates over civic political participation in the second digital, Web 2.0 wave. Our aim is to firstly bring together scholars who offer new empirical findings, based on established research approaches (representative surveys) as well as in more innovative methods (big data models, non-representative samples), offer new research perspectives and construct advanced theoretical models appropriate for the context of political participation within a digital era. Secondly we aim to bring together researchers specializing in two distinct but complementary areas elements of political communication: those who focus on official political communication and those focusing on political participation. We thus seek to create an environment where the two approaches can meet and be discussed together</p> <p>The proposed topic of the workshop has not been the focus of any recent ECPR workshops. However, the proposed panel will build upon discussions from workshops on politics, parties, governments and the Internet, organized by Cristina Leston-Bandeira (Lisbon 2009) and on party performance in the digital era, organized by Rachel Gibson and Andrea Rommele (Antwerp, 2012).</p> <p>The workshop has two proposed outputs. Firstly, and immediately, there is an intention to develop an edited collection, either as a journal special issue, collection for the ECPR/Routledge series or a similar series. Dr Lilleker is series editor of the Political Communication and Campaigning Palgrave series. Secondly, we intend to develop a bid</p>
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for the Horizon 2020 call to fund a research consortium exploring issues relating to political engagement within the online environments and the workshop will be used as a step towards building partnerships and discussing possible directions for research in advance of the calls expected in late 2014.

Relation to existing research:

Democratic participation, though a highly contested concept, may be understood as an extended involvement of individuals in a collective political decision-free and/or decision-making process. It has been argued that with power in the hands of the modern state or global corporations and institutions, rather than the citizen, and the lack of knowledge and interest in politics among the citizenry limits participation to voting in processes for electing political elites only (Schumpeter, 1957; Riker, 1989). The elitist approach of democratic theory contests the democratic ideal of collective decision-making, where all participants should be equal. The potential that the Internet may offer for increasing participation has been a subject of some debate for almost two decades. However most early empirical data offered few optimistic indications, as in the late 1990s the Internet seemed to have no effect on increasing political participation. The reason, referred to as ‘a digital divide’ (Norris 2001), was a gap between those politically active (male, educated, mid-aged, wealthier) and non-active which shaped both Internet access and participation (Hindman 2009). Later studies on political engagement and the possible influence of the Internet have revisited the topic, stressing the emergence of new forms of online political participation (Xenos and Moy 2007; Boulianne 2009). More recently, the emergence of the new communication technologies of Web 2.0 have further challenged the view that a participatory or semi-deliberative democracy remains a much an utopian ideal now as when proposed by Sartori (1976), as it is suggested to have the potential and means to change the existing status-quo building upon work stressing the importance of networked politics (Bang 2003). The work on democratic participation must constantly be revisited in order to keep pace with technological developments, new forms of social communication and how these are also shaping political engagement. The co-creation of political hard and soft content, adaptation and sharing of information, facilitating open political discussions in the “digital agora” (Kirk and Schill 2011), transmitting knowledge and finally creating a community around a political issue, a party or a candidate (Koc-Michalska and Lilleker 2011) cannot be neglected any longer.

Participation is traditionally viewed within narrow terms of voting, campaigning, contacting representatives and officials and pressure group membership and activism (Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba et al, 1995). However more recently studies have focused on ‘non-traditional forms of participation’ facilitated within online environments (McLeod et al, 1999; Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002). Little is done on the political engagement facilitated by the second digital wave offered by emergence of social media. Web 2.0’s defining characteristic is the upending of the producer-audience model of mass communication meaning that the citizens may connect with politicians as well as other citizens interested in political issues (Coleman and Spiller 2003; Jackson and Lilleker 2009). The concept of Web 2.0 has led to the development of websites from a static informational paradigm to one permitting a range of interactions that can be user-to-site or user-to-user (McMillan 2002), allowing for stronger ties between politicians and citizens (Gibson et al. 2008) and a strong personalization of communication (Langer 2007; Wring and Ward 2010) or even for creation of the Fifth Estate of “the connected people” (Crouzet 2007). The concept of online engagement facilitated by the Internet divides the literature. Some studies confirm that online tools enhance learning (Cho et al. 2003), build communities (McLeod et al 1999, Koc-Michalska and Lilleker 2013a,b) or groups of online advocates (Koch et al. 2011), and encourage different forms of engagement (Rojas et al. 2005; Shah et al. 2007; Gil de Zuniga et al. 2009). An interactive online community built around a shared interest is claimed to have clear potential to enhance democratisation processes (Castells 2009) and may have a significant impact on the self-efficacy of citizens (Gil de Zuniga et al. 2009). Regardless of the fact only a minority may participate (Hindman 2009), if citizens witness social and political impacts from their actions within online networks they will increase their

	<p>activism (Sotirovic and McLeod 2001; Rojas et al. 2005; Gil de Zuniga 2009, 2010) and in more diverse groups (Margolis and Moreno-Riano 2009). There is, therefore, potential for the Internet to have a positive impact upon democratic participation, through enhancing political knowledge and facilitating political discussion (Chadwick 2006; Ward and Vedel 2006). Some researchers argue that the Internet can also draw new participants to political engagement by lowering the barriers to participation and facilitating communication among citizens but also between citizens and elected officials. They argue that Internet users generally seek more information, become more knowledgeable, more interested in politics and more engaged (Jennings and Zeitner 2003; Johnson and Kaye 2003; Wang 2007; Xenos and Moy 2007) and enjoy greater knowledge about current socio-political events and participate more intensively in offline political activities (Chiche, Koc-Michalska & Vedel, 2011), also those politically active online are more likely to be sure about their electoral choices (Vedel and Koc-Michalska 2007). Mobilization theory, as outlined above, is contrasted by adherents to reinforcement theory, who claim the Internet only strengthens existing patterns of engagement, so only facilitating the engagement of citizens who are already politically active. Online political activity requires the willingness and ability to locate political information, many Internet browsers seek only entertainment and so will be no more likely to engage in online political participation as they would offline (Putnam 2000; Margolis and Resnick 2000; Norris 2003). Some suggest that new form so political participation are low effort and so evidence low involvement and engagement (Morozov, 2011); such cyber skeptics suggest there is little or no relation between Internet use and political participation, political knowledge or efficacy (Zhang and Chia 2006; Scheufele and Nisbet 2002; Koch 2005).</p> <p>The complex theoretical debates apply to the second digital wave, the rise of purely online and social media yet there is little empirical evidence to support any particular perspective. Some researchers argue social media have positive informative and mobilizing role (Neuman et al., 1992; Norris, 2000; Dalton, 2002), others found media to contribute only to political cynicism, inefficacy or disengagement (e.g., Robinson, 1976; Cappella and Jamieson, 1997; Putnam, 2000). Even if it is too soon for coherent conclusions from studies on the 2012 elections we could claim that there are some indications that usage of social media enhances political participation for those who previously would not have engaged. The Obama 2008 campaign showed how minority grouped and young people could become campaign participants (Barr, 2009). Data from analyses of the French 2012 elections observed social media activity does not follow the traditional gender and generational gap identified for political engagement (Lilleker and Koc-Michalska 2013). These findings reinforce the perspective that online participation has a cumulatively reinforcing effect. Kirk and Schill (2011) argue that online civic engagement involves seeking information, political discussion and active participation, demonstrating that all three are correlated as one may reinforce the other. They also highlight the lack of research on the role and effects of new tools offered by Web 2.0, such as the social networks, popularization of the purely online media, the blogosphere, a ridding online commentariat using forums and participatory spaces as well as ‘viewer-created’ content utilizing sharing sites (YouTube, Flickr).</p>
<p>Likely participants:</p>	<p>The workshop seeks to bring together scholars from a wide range of disciplines: political science, sociology, communication and media studies. We would like to gather researchers concentrating in their studies on all issues in the range described in the Focus of the workshop. Individuals and groups of scholars working on one country as well as several countries’ comparison; working on representative samples based on electoral studies and on surveys run on non-representative samples (special groups surveys (bloggers, social network community) as well as on studies run in special conditions (e.g. additional surveys run within Voters Advice Application studies).</p>
<p>Type of Papers required:</p>	<p>The proposed workshop would bring together researchers from diverse disciplines to develop understanding of civic political engagement, attitudes towards political participation, effects on political knowledge, and revisit the role of traditional and new</p>

	<p>media as a source of political information for the digital era. We search for diversified papers concentrating, but not limiting to the following issues:</p> <p><i>Political engagement – citizens and their usage of the online environment</i></p> <p>This theme explores the logic of political engagement patterns and what potential there is for transformation due to digital communication technologies. Papers should cover theoretically and empirically between traditional forms of political engagements and new forms of political engagement offered through the Internet, and especially social media tools and platforms. The papers will contribute to theoretical debates on the definition of civic engagement; the extent that the Internet facilitates innovation, how it can be recognized and measured? This theme also seeks to identify whether new demographics are drawn towards forms of political participation and engagement or if political communication online reinforces existing patterns of behaviour. As a corollary we ask whether the Internet lead to expanding the political public sphere.</p> <p><i>Political actors – revisiting political communication paradigms</i></p> <p>Online political communication managers face constant challenges in designing strategies to attract new supporters while retaining and finding a role for their members and advocates. The innovations consistent with the post-modern online campaigning model basing on hybrid non-stop communication demands constant attention, implicates immediate response and high level of presence. In the same time the image and impression management strategies appear much harder if not impossible to control in the internet era. We are seeking papers presenting the studies on different political actors' communication on internet in their political or social campaigning. We are interested in specific case studies but also in papers with a comparative perspective – among diverse political actors or different political environments.</p> <p>The papers that are strongly encouraged for submission are those based on theoretical and empirical research covering topics of proposed workshop. We are interested in studies drawing on data from representative and non-representative survey samples, based on standard methods as well as more experimental approaches.</p>
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Funding:	
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Biographical notes:	<p>Karolina Koc-Michalska, PhD, is currently an assistant professor in SciencesCom – Audencia School of Management and an associated researcher with the Centre for Political Research at Sciences-Po, Paris France. Her research focuses on online political communication, online campaign strategies, the role of social networks in Western politics and changes in political engagement. She is also interested in original methods, like webcartography or large non-representative samples of specifically targeted groups. She has published in Journal of European Communication, Journal of Information Technology and Politics, as well as chapters on the campaigning effects and media influence in French presidential elections.</p> <p>Darren Lilleker, PhD, is Director of the Centre for Public Communication and Senior Lecturer in The Media School, Bournemouth University. Dr Lilleker's expertise is in public engagement in politics, and in particular how public engagement can be potentiated and facilitated using technological innovations. Dr Lilleker has published widely on the professionalisation and marketisation of political communication including the textbook Key Concepts in Political Communication (Sage, 2006), and Political Campaigning, Elections and the Internet (Routledge, 2011) and has co-edited The Marketing of Political Parties (MUP, 2006), Voters or Consumers (CSP, 2008) and Political Marketing in Comparative Perspective (MUP, 2005).</p>
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