The Deliberative Quality of Communication Conference 2018
Citizens, Media and Politics in Challenging Times: Perspectives on the Deliberative Quality of Communication

November 8 – 9, 2018
Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES), Mannheim, Germany
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1. Introductory Words

Dear colleagues, dear participants,

We are very happy to welcome you at “The Deliberative Quality of Communication Conference 2018: Citizens, Media and Politics in Changing Times: Perspectives on the Deliberative Quality of Communication” at the Mannheim Centre for European Social Research.

The response to our Call for Abstracts was extremely positive. We received 52 high-quality submissions, from which we selected 20 contributions from national and international colleagues of all qualification levels. This corresponds to an acceptance rate of about 40 percent. We are in particular very proud on our very impressive and diverse conference program. The program includes 20 plenary talks given by lecturers from seven countries (Austria, Germany, Israel, Spain, Switzerland, UK, and USA) and from various disciplines thus offering exciting insights and stimulating discussions. Moreover, a keynote will shed light on pressing questions in deliberation research and a roundtable on the future of deliberation research with highly esteemed scholars will pave the way for drafting a strategic roadmap for the future of deliberation research.

The conference will bring together political and communication scientists, who deal with highly relevant questions on the deliberative qualities of offline and online communication of citizens, media and politics. Overall, the conference aims to pave the way for an integrated and forward-looking understanding of the deliberativity of modern political communication. The application of innovative research methods to answer original research questions will be of particular concern.

We look forward to an educational, inspiring and entertaining conference!

Welcome to Mannheim and welcome to “The Deliberative Quality of Communication Conference 2018”,

Christiane Grill, Anne Schäfer, Charlotte Löb & Chung-hong Chan
2. Call for Abstracts

Western democracies nowadays face a number of challenges induced by political developments. These challenges have been affecting the way in which citizens, the media and political elites communicate about politics. Critical observers witness a deteriorating quality of political conversations between ordinary citizens. It appears no longer possible to discuss politics normally. A high-choice media environment facilitated by online and in particular social media enables citizens to refrain from exposing themselves to counter-attitudinal information and engaging in cross-cutting political talk. The polarization of opinions within society is promoted by increasingly fragmented media systems and a reporting style that favors sensational and scandalous over a balanced and multifaceted reporting. Rapid media cycles shorten time for balanced and thorough argumentation and media outlets are steadily confronted with the accusation of producing fake news. Political actors adapt to the media logic by employing ever more simplified and emotionally arousing communication. Instead of deliberating publicly on complex problems and finding compromises or solutions, political elites rather prefer to communicate through short soundbites and populist messages to promote their positions and eventually attract voters at election time. Overall, these dynamics indicate a deteriorating deliberative quality of political communication among and between citizens, the media and political elites. While this phenomenon has caused concern among scholars from both political and communication science, it still needs further empirical substantiation and demand a reflection on extant theories.

This conference aims at addressing the deliberative quality of communication among and between citizens, media and political elites. Within this research context, we welcome both theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions focusing on the deliberative quality of communication. The proposals can address – but are not limited – to the following questions:

- To which extent does ordinary citizens’ talk about politics come close to the genuine type of deliberation? Who participates in political talk, who does not and why? Do citizens talk to those with viewpoints that conflict with their own? What are the underlying motives and condition that give rise to homogenous or heterogeneous talk about politics? Which variables affect the quality of informal civic discussions? Do citizens’ daily exchanges resemble reasoned and well-argued debates or harsh fights at the expense of proper justification? To which extent does the online sphere of political communication promote respectively impede deliberation? Are platform interventions (e.g., Facebook’s proposed policy of removing hate speech and fake news) a panacea to improve the quality of online deliberation and to save deliberative democracy?
- To which extent do different features of the media systems influence mediated deliberation? How does the increased polarization and fragmentation of media environments translate into the deliberative quality of the media? How deliberative is the media system as a whole? How deliberative are individual media types, formats, or programs?
- How do political, national and cultural climates shape deliberation? To which extent do different types of the political system affect the deliberative quality within the public sphere? How does the increased polarization of the political environments affect formal deliberation? How do political elites engage with populist actors who decline to engage in reasoned and constructive dialogue?
- Which opportunities and challenges do big data offer for the analysis of deliberation? What are the methodological challenges and pitfalls when measuring deliberation? To which extent, and if so how, may computational methods help in identifying the criteria for deliberation?
3. Program Overview

**Wednesday, November 7**

19:00 Informal get-together
Venue: Café Lido, Seckenheimer Str. 26, 68165 Mannheim

**Thursday, November 8**

08:30 - 09:00 Registration

09:00 - 09:15 Conference opening and introduction

09:15 - 10:35 Panel 1: Spheres of deliberation
A normative framework for assessing media performance in both democratic and autocratic regimes
Scott Althaus (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), Tamir Sheafer (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Gadi Wolfsfeld (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

The deliberative topologies of informal public spheres
Thomas Häussler (University of Bern)

It takes more than good arguments! Integrating approaches on deliberation, social influence and social choice
Christiane Eilders (Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf), Katharina Esau (Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf)

Uncivil or engaged? A meta-discursive analysis of Israeli students’ perceptions of public dialogue
Idit Manosevitch (Netanya Academic College), Elie Friedman (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

10:35 - 11:00 Coffee break

11:00 - 12:00 Panel 2: Deliberating on policies
Deliberative quality and expertise: Uses of evidence in citizens’ juries on wind farms
Stephen Elstub (Newcastle University), Sara Drury (University of Edinburgh), Oliver Escobar (University of Edinburgh), Jennifer Roberts (University of Strathclyde)

Deliberation through social media? Twitter conversations on tourism in the city of Barcelona
Joan Balcells (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya), Rosa Borge (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya), Albert Padró-Solanet (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya)

Are echo chambers the issue? An assessment of the online debate on refugee policy on Facebook
Rainer Freudenthaler (University of Mannheim)

12:00 - 13:00 Lunch at the conference venue

13:00 - 14:00 Keynote address: The force of the argument source
Kaisa Herne (University of Tampere)

14:00 - 14:30 Coffee break
14:30 - 15:50  Panel 3: Determinants and consequences of citizens’ deliberation
Who talks and who listens? Examining moderators of conversation effects on vote choice
Lea Gärtner (Mannheim Centre for European Social Research), Alexander Wuttke (Mannheim Centre for European Social Research), Harald Schoen (University of Mannheim)

How to motivate participants to deliberate? Extracting and analyzing deliberative sequences
Valentin Gold (University of Goettingen)

In need of the devil’s advocate: The impact of cross-cutting exposure on deliberation-within, argument quality, and political participation
Frank M. Schneider (University of Mannheim), Carina Weinmann (University of Koblenz-Landau)

Deliberation in the lab - The effect of communication on information sharing, cooperation, and consensus
Marius Bayer (University of Konstanz)

15:50 - 16:20  Coffee break

16:20 - 17:40  Panel 4: Political actors and citizens in deliberative discourses
Productive, democratic validity claims? Testing the role of Jürgen Habermas’ validity claims for the quality of public discourse
Uta Rußmann (University of Applied Sciences for Management & Communication Vienna)

DelibAnalysis: Measuring deliberative quality of online political discourse using machine learning
Eleonore Fournier-Tombs (University of Geneva), Giovanna Di Marzo Serungendo (University of Geneva)

Saboteurs in the house: The effects of disagreement on speeches and sentiments in parliament
Resul Umit (University of Lucerne), Katrin Auel (Institute for Advanced Studies Vienna)

When conflict fuels negativity. A comparative analysis of the tone of electoral campaigns worldwide
Jürgen Maier (University of Koblenz-Landau), Alessandro Nai (University of Amsterdam)

19:00  Conference dinner
Venue: Kleiner Rosengarten, U6 19, 68161 Mannheim

Friday, November 9

09:00 - 09:30  Registration

09:30 - 10:30  Panel 5: Deliberative qualities of user comments
Is there a connection between mediated public deliberation and the deliberative quality of subsequent user discussions?
Ines Engelmann (Friedrich Schiller University Jena), Hanna Marzinkowski (Friedrich Schiller University Jena)

Negotiating with others online: How users interact in comment sections and indicate approval and disapproval of others’ ideas
Constanze Küchler (Augsburg University), Teresa K. Naab (Augsburg University)

Deliberative (dis)similarities in the comment section
Hanna Marzinkowski (Friedrich Schiller University Jena), Ines Engelmann (Friedrich Schiller University Jena)

10:30 - 11:00  Coffee break
11:00 - 12:00  Panel 6: Deliberative interventions
Is uncivil communication always bad? Theoretical considerations towards a systematization of incivility in online discussions
Marike Bormann (Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf), Dominique Heinbach (Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf), Dennis Friess (Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf)

Conceptualizing emergent citizenship norms as drivers of user interventions in disrupted online discussions
Pablo Porten-Cheé (Weizenbaum Institute for the Networked Society, Freie Universität Berlin), Marlene Kunst (Weizenbaum Institute for the Networked Society, Freie Universität Berlin)

Trolling for deliberation? Theoretical considerations and empirical evidence on the impact of organized counter speech in online discussions
Dennis Friess (Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf), Marc Ziegele (Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf)

12:00 - 12:45  Lunch at the conference venue

12:45 - 13:45  Roundtable: Drafting a strategic roadmap for the future of deliberation research
André Bächtiger (University of Stuttgart), Céline Colombo (University of Zürich), Christiane Elders (Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf), Hartmut Wessler (University of Mannheim)

13:45 - 14:00  Closing remarks
4. Committees

4.1. Organizing Committee

Christiane Grill, Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES)

Anne Schäfer, University of Mannheim

Charlotte Löb, Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES)

Chung-hong Chan, Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES)

4.2. Advisory Committee

Pablo Barberá, London School of Economics

Christiane Eilders, University of Düsseldorf

Lilach Nir, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
5. **Keynote**

**The force of the argument source: A survey experiment on the evaluation of political arguments**  
*Kaisa Herne, Elina Kestilä-Kekkonen, Laura Mattinen, Josefina Sipinen*

The keynote addresses the influence of argument source on the evaluation of argument validity. More specifically, the keynote sheds light on whether partial, impartial and reluctant sources generate different evaluations of argument validity. Previous research has revealed that source characteristics such as expertise and trustworthiness affect the persuasiveness of communication. Further, impartial and reluctant sources have been observed to promote persuasion. We look at evaluations of argument validity, rather than attitude change. We explore the source effect via a survey experiment where participants are asked to evaluate politically relevant arguments. To avoid the influence of participants’ personal opinions on the issues, participants are asked to take a general perspective when they evaluate arguments. Respondents are randomly allocated into four treatments: a Control treatment with no argument source; a Partial Source treatment, a Reluctant Source treatment and an Impartial Source treatment. Our results show that we can reject the null hypothesis of no impact of the argument source. Further, in our data, it is the impartial source who gives rise to higher evaluations of argument quality compared to a reluctant or a partial source.

6. **Roundtable: Drafting a Strategic Roadmap for the Future of Deliberation Research**

Discussants: *André Bächtiger, Céline Colombo, Christiane Eilders, Hartmut Wessler*
Plenary Talks

Panel 1: Spheres of deliberation

A Normative Framework for Assessing Media Performance in both Democratic and Autocratic Regimes
Scott Althaus, Tamir Sheafer, Gadi Wolfsfeld

Much research in political communication assumes that media systems should be independent from political systems. But rarely do these literatures consider why political independence should be important from a normative perspective. From the standpoint of democratic theories, media performance is not inherently interesting or important. What matters from the standpoint of democratic theories is the quality of representation that political systems produce. Our paper develops a normative framework for defining why media independence is an important concept for political communication. We specify some core representational activities that can be used as central criteria for evaluating media performance, and explore sources of tension in the representational dynamics between media systems and political systems that provide a chronic source of friction within political communication regimes. We then embed these conceptual elements into a representational framework that can be applied to autocratic regimes as easily as democratic ones, so that media performance can be assessed from multiple normative perspectives across the full spectrum of regime types.

The deliberative topologies of informal public spheres
Thomas Häussler

The informal public sphere in a Habermasian sense (Habermas, 1996) is constituted by interrelated flows of communication, which together form overlapping networks that connect actors, arguments, positions, etc. and crystallize around specific issues. Crucially, depending on whether these public spheres are anchored in civil society or originate in the political-administrative center, they are deemed either more conducive or more harmful to deliberative practices that allow actors from different groups and social strata to articulate their grievances, make demands and raise criticism. However, regardless of their origin, even in today’s digitalised societies informal public spheres are dominated by mass media (Habermas, 1996, p. 379), and the ‘struggle for recognition’ (Honneth, 1996) thus translates into a struggle for visibility in their coverage. The question therefore arises how different public sphere types are processed by the media. More specifically, this paper is interested in examining whether the media act as a ‘mandatary of an enlightened audience’ (Habermas, 1996, p. 378) and compensate for instance for those actors underrepresented in power-ridden, center-rooted debates; what levels of argumentative rationality are associated with the two public sphere types; how reciprocal the discourses are – in other words, how the central deliberative dimensions are enacted. Against this background, this paper develops a comparative framework that systematically assesses the deliberative differences between the two main public sphere types by modelling the discursive networks of periphery and center initiated informal public spheres using content analytical data gathered across four decades, different debate and newspaper types from the UK, thus focusing on a setting whose political parameters are less open to inclusive deliberative practices than, say, those of consensus democracies such as Switzerland (Kriesi, 2004; Lijphart, 2012). The contributions of this paper are threefold: first, it casts a comparative perspective on one of the main bifurcations in public sphere theory between periphery and center initiated political discourses, which so far has received scant empirical attention. Second, it develops a methodological approach based on social network analysis, which allows us to model the relationships between actors in a political debate, to map the topology of the space they co-constitute through their interaction patterns, and thus to uncover and measure central indicators of the different public sphere types such as the degree of hierarchy they incorporate, who is part of the core of the political space and who is
relegated to its margins and who acts as a broker between otherwise unconnected participants. Third, empirically the paper shows that while periphery-initiated discourses are indeed more inclusive in terms of the actors they incorporate, they are inferior to center-rooted debates when it comes to the argumentative dimensions of the deliberative process. This has important theoretical implications, as power-ridden public spheres are depicted in deliberative theory as representing a deficient form of democratic debate. The results also show that the media largely fail to compensate for those actors that are only weakly integrated in the debate, and the paper thus adds another layer to the complex relationship between deliberative theory and empirical praxis.

It takes more than good arguments! Integrating approaches on deliberation, social influence and social choice
Christiane Eilders & Katharina Esau

Research has long considered the role of mediated communication in shaping citizens’ opinions (e.g., Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944; Noelle-Neumann, 1993). Biased reporting and one-sided partisan opinions in the media sometimes impede free opinion formation in the audience, but this malperformance should not obscure the key democratic function of the media: To the degree to which the media address relevant issues and provide sufficient information on the positions and arguments of political actors, they enable citizens to form considered opinions (Habermas, 2008). With the advent of the internet in general and of social network sites in particular the conditions for opinion formation have changed fundamentally. Not only the media on their online news sites and SNS such as Facebook, but also political elites have established platforms for discussion to meet demands for more participation. Due to the low-threshold options for participation in public discourse the number and diversity of opinions that can be considered have substantially increased. Because civil society actors are often seen to comply particularly well with the normative ideal of public discourse, their increase nourishes hopes of an improved deliberative quality. In addition, the new forms of mass interpersonal communication (Neubaum & Krämer, 2017) such as user comments, likes and shares, make fellow users’ opinions observable. They may be used as proxies for public opinion and thereby affect opinion formation in both the passive audience and the participants in these online discussions. Some platforms offer voting devices, which make it even easier to monitor the climate of opinion in a given discussion space (e.g. adhocracy). The observability of others’ opinions competes with the deliberative quality for shaping the opinions of observers and participants. The paper we want to deliver suggests a model suitable to explain opinion formation in online discussions, which integrates the above-mentioned factors. The paper discusses the basic strengths and weaknesses of deliberation research and includes factors from social influence and social choice research to increase the explanatory power of the model. Online deliberation research has dealt with the new conditions in public discourse and has already generated a considerable volume of findings. Its focus has been on assessing the deliberative quality of online discussions and the platform characteristics, which represent the throughput- and input-dimension of deliberation. The output-dimension, which deals with opinion change or the resulting decisions has received less scholarly attention (Friess & Eilders, 2015). Thus, it remains open how rationality, reciprocity, constructiveness, and respect (Cohen, 1989; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Habermas, 1973) affect the dynamics of opinion formation in an online discussion. From a normative point of view, the quality of arguments supporting a position should play a decisive role for opinion formation, while other factors such as power, prestige or popularity should be irrelevant. According to social influence approaches, however, opinion formation follows the majority opinion largely independent of substantive statements and arguments (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Price, Nir, & Cappella, 2006). In online environments, the effect of the observable opinion climate is referred to as online social influence (Neubaum & Krämer, 2017). With regard to an empirical test of the integrated model suggested in this paper, we expect that social influence processes either compete with or reinforce the
effects of deliberative quality. In order to determine the relative strength of the effects and identify the conditions under which the effects prevail, factors from both research strands need to be tested against each other in various constellations. Finally, vote-centric conceptions of liberal democracy will also be considered in the suggested model. This mainly concerns social choice theory. As many online discussion spaces implement e-voting or e-rating as aggregating mechanisms, social choice theory becomes an increasingly interesting perspective on public opinion formation (Dryzek & List, 2003; List, Luskin, Fishkin, & McLean, 2013). This perspective raises questions on the linkage between opinion formation and collective decision-making through voting and thus addresses another relevant output-dimension of deliberation theory.

Uncivil or Engaged? A Meta Discursive Analysis of Israeli Students’ Perceptions of Public Dialogue
Idit Manosevitch, Elie Friedman

Deliberative democracy seeks to embed deliberative norms and practices in society, offering normative models by which citizens scrutinize issues, thereby considering an array of differing viewpoints (Burkhalter, et al., 2002; Guttman and Thompson, 1996). Normative theory suggests that deliberative dialogue involves both the cognitive process of citizens’ engagement with issues, as well as a communicative-social process that adheres to democratic values such as inclusivity, listening, and respect (Dahl, 1989; Gastil, 2008). While the rational Habermasian public sphere serves as an idealized speech situation (Habermas, 1989), theorists have emphasized the importance of “non-rational” discourse, such as the expression of narratives (Ryfe, 2006; Black, 2008), emotions (Ilouz, 2003), and hostility (Schudson, 1997), as normative values for inclusive deliberation, particularly within fragmented societies. Yet, there appears to be a gap between deliberative ideals and existing public debate. Critical discourse scholars argue that the manufacturing of consent is based on unequal power relations, in which consensual voices dominate the discourse thus excluding marginalized voices (Van Dijk, 1993; Fairclough, 2013). Similarly, ethnographic approaches – through culturally-based “thick descriptions” of existing discursive style, tone, and structure – illustrate how existing modes of interaction reflect specific cultural resources, distant from the deliberative ideal. For example, while American culture values communication as a means for actor individuality (Carbaugh, 1989), Israeli culture has valued communication as a means for advancing social solidarity through “straight talk” (dugri) (Katriel, 1986). Despite the above-mentioned gap between normative deliberative theory and critical and ethnographic scholarship about the nature of existing public discourse, scholarship lacks a meta-discursive understanding of how citizens themselves self-reflexively describe and prescribe the discourse of their own society. This study aims to begin fulfilling this lacuna. Israel offers a unique case study for understanding gaps between deliberative norms and the actual cultural resources that shape public debate. The decline of social solidarity towards a deeply conflicted and fragmented society (Sandler et al., 1999) has transformed dugri straight talk into a hostile dialogue, termed kasach (Katriel, 2004). This antagonistic communication style reflects social fragmentation, and seemingly contradicts core values of deliberative discourse (Guttmann & Thompson, 1996). This study explores the current state and potential of deliberative discourse in Israeli society, by analyzing citizens’ emic understanding of their society’s cultural resources. Using open-ended survey data collected from undergraduate communication students (N=98), we examine Israeli citizens’ perceptions of the state of Israeli political discourse – the norms that govern it, the type of content it incorporates, and who is included. We examine both students’ descriptions of existing public debate as well as their perceptions regarding the aspired nature of Israeli public discourse. Taking a dual-method approach, we combine a quantitative content analysis of students’ responses, with qualitative analysis. The latter applies a toolbox taken from several branches of discourse analysis and ethnography, specifically tools for examining cultural codes, national narratives, differential value attribution, exclusion, and legitimization (Carbaugh, 1989; Katriel, 1986; Lazar & Lazar, 2004; Wodak, 2009). We aim to shed light on how Israeli citizens describe and prescribe norms and voices characterizing their society’s political discourse.
Panel 2: Deliberating on policies

Deliberative Quality and Expertise: Uses of Evidence in Citizens’ Juries on Wind Farms
Stephen Elstub, Sara Drury, Oliver Escobar, Jennifer Roberts

Today the global political environment increasingly faces issues that spark tensions between expertise and lived experience. Scientific public problems draw attention towards this tension, as they require negotiation across and through multiple modes of claims and evidence, from technical and scientific to personal and moral (Gastil, 2017; Goodnight, 2005). Forms of democratic innovations, including deliberative approaches such as citizens’ juries, have been proposed as a means of managing these tensions and to inform more representative and fairer decision making. But there are questions around participatory processes, scientific public problems, and deliberative quality. Two prominent forms of argumentation in public deliberation processes are derived from expertise and experience. Deliberative quality does not necessarily mean a reliance on either over the other, but rather a more flexible negotiation of different forms of argumentation. Arguments from expertise are referred to as argumentum ad verecundian, or appeals to authority (Walton, 2010; Woods & Walton, 1974). Yet appeals to expert opinion are not absolute, and may marginalize or ignore the perspectives of citizens. A localized deliberative context invites arguments from experiences, which Frank Fischer (2000: 194-195) labels “local knowledge”. These arguments are slightly harder to define as they draw from a number of evidentiary sources, including personal experiences, interests, and local culture and contexts. Questions have been raised around the use and interaction of different forms of argument in public deliberation over scientific issues and the effect on deliberative quality. How, for example, might a public contextualize scientific evidence within localized values and culture? Or how might a public shift away from previously held values when confronted with compelling scientific claims? The 2013-2014 ClimateXChange project “Citizens’ juries on wind farm development in Scotland” offers an opportunity to examine how different types of evidence impact deliberative quality in participatory public deliberations. This project organized and held three citizens’ juries in three locations in Scotland (Roberts & Escobar, 2015), where the locations varied in proximity to active or proposed windfarms. Each jury comprised 15-18 local citizens who spent two days considering the question: What should be the key principles for deciding about wind farm development, and why? The juries had an information phase when witnesses gave evidence and advocacy on energy, climate change, and wind farms. This was followed by a deliberation phase where the group considered, discussed, and decided their recommendations for key principles to guide onshore wind farm development in Scotland. Using transcripts from the ClimateXChange project, this paper analyzes arguments from expertise and arguments from experiences by adopting an interpretative research methodology (Ercan, Hendriks, & Boswell, 2017) and utilizing theories of argumentation (Goodnight, 1982). The analysis identifies prominent forms of argument and considers how they interact and function in decision-making, including when arguments function to positively or negatively impact the deliberative quality. As the juries’ experiences and deliberations differed across the locations, the findings here offer insights on discursive contours of the relationship between expertise, evidence, and deliberative quality.

Deliberation through Social Media? Twitter Conversations on Tourism in the City of Barcelona
Joan Balcells, Rosa Borge, Albert Padró-Solanet

The goal of this paper is to assess the deliberative quality of citizen online debates through Twitter. Focusing on the issue of tourism externalities in the city of Barcelona, we analyze the way conversations emerge and unfold as well as their quality according to normative standards of deliberation. In order to do so, we will analyze conversations on Twitter related to the impact of tourism in the city and other related issues (such as gentrification). Understanding the way and conditions under which deliberation among citizens takes place in social media might provide useful information about the role of this channel in enlarging the public sphere or, just the contrary, in keeping polarization at its height. The debate on how to deal with the negative
externalities associated with tourism has gained saliency in Barcelona and has become one of the main topics of discussion in local politics. This is a global phenomenon that is affecting many other cities that have experienced mass tourism. The disruptive expansion of tourist apartment platforms and the rising cost of housing have triggered a war between neighbors, collaborative economy platforms, hotels, local governments and tourists, which is pervading all spheres of communication including social media, traditional media and local government platforms. Social media like Twitter are already a medium where citizens openly exchange ideas and opinions in a very direct way. They combine the promise of a radically democratic environment with phenomena that point to the opposite direction, such as mass manipulation by powerful groups. Twitter allows the fast spreading of ideas and information (for instance, through hashtags, links and retweets) which makes it an ideal platform for channeling protest and contestation. It allows users to engage in a conversation with any other user (through mentions and replies), opening new spaces for public discussion. The analysis of this communication environment becomes crucial for understanding the way democratic societies are now facing political conflict. However, there are, at the same time, obvious difficulties for certain groups and interests to take advantage of this tool (e.g. different digital divide phenomena) which compromise the level of plurality and inclusiveness from a normative point of view. The theoretical background of deliberative quality provides a useful analytical frame for studying policy issue debates. Social media provide different opportunities because of, for instance, the different degree of openness and control (e.g., there is no moderation in Twitter). We expect Twitter conversations to obviously involve higher number of participants, though this does not necessarily imply that the interests and voices of all stakeholders are represented with the same force. We understand plurality of opinions to be a crucial dimension for there to be deliberation, since when opinions go unchallenged there is no need to exchange reasons. So, the analysis of Twitter conversations will be mainly based on assessing the level of opinion exchange between different viewpoints (i.e. plurality), considering as well the other dimensions which define deliberative quality (such as reciprocity or civility). To build the database for the analysis, we rely on the one hand, on generating representative samples of Twitter conversations. These samples are selected by using filtering strategies in different layers. On a first wave, we plan to retrieve tweets from identifying those users and hashtags that are central to this debate. In a second phase, we plan to select only those tweets, which are a reply to other users’ tweets so as to focus the attention on conversations. Methodologically, we will use a combination of social network analysis, to understand the structure of conversations, as well as content analysis, for the assessment of the deliberative quality. Overall, the analysis pretends to provide a better understanding of deliberation in social media by making a twofold contribution, i.e. by (1) examining the stakeholders who participate in the debate, and (2) measuring the quality and structure of conversations.

Are echo chambers the issue? An assessment of the online debate on refugee policy on Facebook
Rainer Freudenthaler

On one hand, deliberative democrats like Sunstein (2009) have expressed concern that the increasing closing-off of online spaces towards different views and self-selection of news sources within different online groups can lead to echo chambers in which citizens only consume media that conform to their prejudices and reinforce their views, rather than exchanging different ideas and being exposed to different points of view. On the other hand, counter-public theory (e.g. Fraser, 1990) proposes that particular public spheres in which counter-hegemonic actors can affirm their own perspective and foster their own views in relative safety from dominant hegemonic narratives can actually foster pluralism and allow subaltern groups to find their own voice. Therefore, the question is counter-publics closed off from mainstream news outlets and that rely on their own alternative media are spaces to foster discursive opening, or rather places that breed dogmatic closure. I used snowball sampling to download the posts of 1466 Facebook pages discussing refugee policy to figure out which different groups of counter-public actors are active on Facebook, covering posts from one year. Using a community identification algorithm (Clauset, et al., 2004), I could identify 25 clusters of pages,
with the 8 biggest clusters closely mapping ideological divides and clearly showing that the linking structure within the Facebook network follows ideological proximity. Using qualitative content analysis of the tweets of 10 pages representative of the ideological spectrum I found within these pages, I investigated whether the pages did conform to a standard of agonistic respect (Uldam & Askanius, 2013) – meaning that they would respect other democratic actors, even if they disagreed with them, as legitimate opponents. I find that there is generally low occurrence of agonistic respect within these pages, with higher respect for opposing views on moderate, religious and left-leaning pages. Considering the websites outside of Facebook that the pages link to, I find that news media use roughly corresponds to the ideological positions of different groups, with left-wing pages linking to center-left and left news outlets, and right-wing pages linking to center-right and right news outlets, but with severe caveats: even the groups ideologically most closed off still rely on mainstream news outlets, mainly when individual news items fit with the ideological narrative of the page. This suggests that by offering their own reading of mainstream news – reinterpreting them to fit their message – counter-publics can use mainstream news to serve their own narrative. Even ideologically closed-off pages do not ignore mainstream news – they selectively share them when they fit with their own message. This suggests that we should consider the role political narratives and ideology play in closing off actors’ worldview when discussing the issue of echo chambers.

Panel 3: Determinants and consequences of citizens’ deliberation

Who talks and who listens? Examining moderators of conversation effects on vote choice
Lea Gärtner, Alexander Wuttke, Harald Schoen

Citizens do not make vote choices in a vacuum, their electoral preferences are shaped by the social context, in which they are embedded. The importance of social networks is well known since Lazarsfeld et al. (1969) first demonstrated that citizens’ attitudes and opinions are influenced by the company they keep. Over the last decade, there has been a renewed interest in the impact of social contexts on political behaviour (e.g., Beck, 2002; Bicchieri, 2006; Zuckerman, 2005). Drawing on the line of research first established by Lazarsfeld and his colleagues, scholars have shown that social contexts influence people’s vote choice (e.g., Baker et al., 2006; Beck, 2002; Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1991), turnout (Foos and Rooij, 2017; Gerber et al., 2008; Schmitt-Beck and Mackenrodt, 2010), and other forms of political participation (Huckfeldt et al., 2004), as well as impacting their political attitudes, values and knowledge (Lupton et al., 2015; Zuckerman, 2005). All in all, the importance of political conversations is beyond dispute. However, although we know that political talks exert meaningful effects, we know much less about who is affected by political conversations. The extensive literature on other types of contextual influences, such as electoral campaigns and the media, suggests that individuals differ in their susceptibility to political messages. We suspect that the same is true for conversation effects. Individual differences may occur at two stages. First, some citizens may simply not discuss politics at all. Second, individuals engaged in political conversations may be more or less easily persuaded by their peers. Regarding the first stage, a small number of studies have presented cursory inspections how individual characteristics such as political knowledge and interest affect the participation in political conversations (cf. Schmitt-Beck and Lup, 2013), but, as of yet, there is no comprehensive analysis of the factors enabling or inhibiting participation in political discussion. Even less is known about the second stage. Beyond an analysis by Schmitt-Beck and Partheymüller (2014), who investigated education and political interest as potential moderators of conversation effects, the interaction between individual characteristics and the impact of conversation effects remains obscure. We aim at closing this gap by examining the characteristics of voters who participate in political conversations, as well as analyzing the numerous individual factors with the potential to condition conversation effects, e.g. political knowledge, political interest, the strength of partisanship, and less palpable factors such as personality traits and cognitive styles. To this end, we use a novel survey instrument from the GLES campaign panel (Roßteutscher et al., 2018), which
allows us to link numerous individual characteristics to patterns of participation in political conversation. Exploring the differences in how individuals participate in and react to political conversations will improve our understanding of the role of political conversations in pluralist democracies: If the exchange and change of opinions is an essential means of democratic deliberation, and if political conversations are thus central to citizens’ ability to make informed political decisions, then it is important to know who talks and who listens when it comes to politics.

How to motivate participants to deliberate? Extracting and analyzing deliberative sequences
Valentin Gold

Within the political science community, deliberative communication has been analyzed with respect to three aspects of deliberation: the antecedents, dynamics, and consequences. While we know much about the first and latter aspect, less studies focus on the dynamics within deliberations. Moreover, the term ‘dynamics’ is often misleading as most studies do not analyze the dynamics, but its aggregated representation - e.g. the complete debate. In other words: the dynamics are represented statically. This is surprising since deliberation is just one type of communication and participants in a discourse are not expected to always stick to the rules as defined by deliberative theory. Deliberative dynamics might also emerge over the course of a debate and may emerge in situ (McLaverty and Halpin 2008). A deliberative drift (ibid) – and also its reverse – can occur at any time. In this paper, I open the black-box of conversation dynamics by first applying computational text-analyses to extract various dimensions of deliberation automatically. Second, deliberative sequences are identified within the course of a debate. The sequences are extracted by combining an exploratory visual approach and a statistical procedure. In a third step, I apply a Bayesian model to analyzing the causes of such deliberative sequences. Hence, this paper contributes in extracting the most relevant factors that motivate participants to deliberate.

In need of the devil’s advocate: The impact of cross-cutting exposure on deliberation-within, argument quality, and political participation
Frank M. Schneider, Carina Weinmann

Specifically for deliberative theorists, cross-cutting exposure, that is, the exposure to dissonant views, is a central component of political discussion among citizens (e.g., Habermas, 1989; Manin, 1987; Mutz, 2006). Research found various beneficial discussion effects: It increases political tolerance (Mutz, 2002a, 2006; Robinson, 2010) and political knowledge (Kwak et al., 2005; Scheufele et al., 2006) and improves the quality of people’s political opinions in form of their so-called “argument repertoire” (Price et al., 2002). However, there are mixed results concerning the effect on political participation: Whereas some studies found that cross-cutting exposure encourages citizens to engage in specific political activities (e.g., Lee et al., 2015; Lu & Myrick, 2016; Min & Wohn, 2018), others found that it makes political participation less likely (e.g., Dilliplane, 2011; Mutz, 2002b, 2006). A recent meta-analysis even suggests that cross-cutting exposure does not have any effect on political participation at all (Matthes et al., 2018). We would argue that in part, these inconclusive results exist because most studies drew on cross-sectional survey data to investigate this relationship. Thus, like for any other relationship the lack of experimental designs makes it difficult to account for all third variables and find clear evidence for (or against) a causal relationship. Moreover, underlying processes cannot be examined properly. We aim to address these problems by conducting at least one experimental study that investigates whether cross-cutting exposure encourages or discourages citizens to engage in political activities. Hereby, we suggest a positive effect on political participation (H1). Further, we assume this effect to be mediated by two processes: First, we suppose that cross-cutting exposure regarding a specific political issue leads people to reflect on this issue in a deliberative sense, that is, we suggest a positive effect on
Deliberative thought processes (H2), also called “deliberation within” (see e.g., Goodin, 2000). Deliberation within, in turn, might then lead to an increased argument repertoire (H3), which has, as argued above, already been shown to be a positive consequence of cross-cutting exposure (Price et al., 2002). To test our hypotheses, we are currently preparing a 2 x 1 (exposure to dissonant vs. consonant views) online experiment with a pre- and post-test questionnaire. Dependent on their prior opinion, participants will be exposed to a news article that either provides pro- or contra-arguments on one of two different political issues (legalization of marihuana and free public transport). Deliberation within (measure: Weinmann, 2018), argument repertoire (measure: Cappella et al., 2002), as well as the intention to engage in specific political activities (measure based on Barrett & Zani, 2015) will be assessed thereafter. Based on an a priori power analysis for a serial mediation model (given a statistical power 1-β = .80, a significance level α = .05, and medium effect sizes between r = .10 and .30; cf. Schoemann et al., 2017), our planned total N for the study comprises at least 480 participants. Currently, we are also preparing an OSF pre-registration (see http://osf.io) of our study. Data collection and analysis will be finished before the conference.

Deliberation in the Lab - The Effect of Communication on Information Sharing, Cooperation, and Consensus

Marius Bayer

Does the deliberative quality of communication positively affect the sharing and processing of private information, the rate of cooperation, and the likelihood of consensus decisions? Can such an effect be isolated from personal interests? The face-to-face communication of simulated two-person conflicts in an experimental setting under laboratory control is analyzed. Participants are randomly assigned to one of four two-person two-options game-theoretic conflict situations that are embedded in a conflict story. Two symmetric constellations (Prisoner’s Dilemma and Chicken) and two asymmetric constellations are used. In the asymmetric constellations, one actor has a dominant strategy not to cooperate and is therefore in a strategic advantage. The participants have 30 minutes to discuss the conflict and agree on a joint decision. The discussion transcripts of 240 observations are used to measure the deliberative quality of the communication between the two participants in four dimensions: justification, equal participation, respect, and accommodation. Measures are used from the VisArgue project (Gold et al. 2017) and combined into an index of deliberative quality of communication. A consensus decision is operationalized in two ways: First, the participants choose to continue cooperating after having returned from the negotiation table and are asked for a final decision in private. Second, the participants are asked how satisfied they are with the attained results at the negotiation table. Overall, I can confirm that communication increases the level of cooperation tremendously, by comparing a decision that the participants take before they communicate with their joint decision after the 30 minutes of negotiation. This effect is strongest in the Prisoner’s Dilemma. However, I cannot provide evidence that the deliberative quality has a positive effect on the sharing and processing of information, on the willingness of the participants to cooperate, and on the likelihood of consensus decisions. Further insights are provided from the individual dimensions: A high level of justification of the advantaged actor negatively affects his or her satisfaction value. For the disadvantaged actors, I find higher satisfaction values when they themselves have high values of justification and lower satisfaction values when their experimental partners have high justification values. Equal participation is positively correlated with the sharing of private information. In one asymmetric constellation, there is also a positive correlation with the participants’ satisfaction. Respect is negatively correlated with the processing of some information. However, the disadvantaged actors’ respect values are positively correlated with their decision to continue cooperating. Higher levels of accommodation are negatively associated with the sharing and processing of private information and with the advantaged actors’ level of satisfaction. Accommodation is also negatively associated with the advantaged actors’ decisions to cooperate in two of the four game-theoretic constellations. I also observe that participants in the advantaged position use more arguments, but only if they are male. In summary, I
conclude that the participants had a high predisposition to cooperate in the experiment; however, high levels of justification seem to lead to frustration and defection rather than cooperation and consensus.

Panel 4: Political actors and citizens in deliberative discourses

Productive, democratic validity claims? Testing the role of Jürgen Habermas’ validity claims for the quality of public discourse

_Uta Rußmann_

Many studies on the deliberative quality of communication are based on/refer to the work of Jürgen Habermas and his Theory of Communicative Action (Habermas, 1984, 1987, 2001). Habermas examines various speech acts, defining the rational conditions for mutual understanding in communicative action. In everyday communication practice, participants need to accept the validity of differing demands and claims to reach a mutual understanding. Habermas emphasizes four validity claims (“Geltungsansprüche”: intelligibility, truth, truthfulness, and legitimacy. From a normative perspective, communication will continue as long as participants do not doubt the fulfilment of them (ideal speech situation). However, in everyday communication among and between political parties, media and citizens, the validity claims are open to criticism and justification and then, participants have to react. Basic features of the democratic ideal, which reflect the quality of the participants' contributions are mutual respect (Fishkin, 1991), reasons to justify positions and behavior (Cohen, 1989; Gutmann & Thompson, 2004), solutions offered for a problem or issue, and reciprocity (Graham & Witschke, 2003; Kies, 2010) (see also Gerhards et al., 1998; Spörndli, 2004; Steenbergen et al., 2003). In this process of argumentation, the validity claims are tested for their rational justifiability as true, correct, and authentic (Habermas, 1984). The aim of this study is to test empirically whether doubts on the four validity claims actually enhance rational-critical discourse. Therefore, I define five indicators for the quality of public discourse – the higher the level of each, the higher the quality of public discourse: generalized, simple and specific statements of reasons for positions taken, partial and precise proposals of solutions, expressions of respect/disrespect for positions and other people, reciprocity, and doubts of the four validity claims. Hence, the main question of this study is, when doubts are raised on the four validity claims will we find a greater use of statements of reasons, proposals of solutions, expressions of respect, and more reciprocity by political parties, the media and citizens and thus, a higher quality of public discourse? Using quantitative content analysis, I analyze press releases of six political parties, online newspaper articles including their comments in the forum to each article in four newspapers, and postings on parties' official Facebook pages during the last six weeks of the 2013 Austrian national election campaign (19.08.-28.09.2013). The coding for parties' press releases and online newspaper articles is almost completed. The coding of the 116 posts and 2.405 comments on Facebook has been completed. Early results for Facebook show a correlation for doubts concerning the legitimacy with all indicators on all levels except for precise proposals of solutions (r=.010; Pearson correlation coefficient). In addition, a positive correlation is given for doubts concerning truth and general as well as simple statement of reasons, precise proposals of solutions and disrespectful expressions; a negative correlation can be found with respectful expressions as well as reciprocity. (Doubts on the intelligibility were not expressed on Facebook.) In the next step, for all positive and negative correlations regression analysis will be conducted. Final results will be available in November.
DelibAnalysis: Measuring deliberative quality of online political discourse using machine learning
Eleonore Fournier-Tombs, Giovanna Di Marzo Serungendo

In his important book “The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere”, Habermas (1961) argues that during the 20th century, effective fora for public deliberation died out, and were replaced with one-way communication technologies such as the radio or the television, through which citizens received information passively. In the last decade, however, it has become abundantly clear that there is now a new forum for public deliberation - the Internet. In particular, social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, and blogs, allow citizens to communicate with each other and with their representatives directly. This paper examines political discourse quality online and proposes a methodology for analyzing online conversations in an automated way. The study is based on seminal work on the Discourse Quality Index (DQI) by Steenbergen et al (2003) and is primarily grounded in Habermas’ work. We build upon this work by examining the quality of the public sphere in a digital age. Primarily, we examine the portion of the public sphere, which deals with political discussions on online platforms. Drawing on the DQI, we manually code a portion of political comments to create a training dataset for a classifier, which can then be used on much larger data corpuses. We propose a topic clustering algorithm which gives context to the DQI score for any given conversation. The proposed technique, DelibAnalysis, is a combination of random forests classification and k-means clustering using term-frequency inverse-document-frequency. This methodology was selected after comparative testing using logistic regression and support vector machines (SVM), as well as a variety of data formats and parameters. After presenting the DelibAnalysis methodology, we apply it to a diverse dataset of online conversations between citizens and elected representatives in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom using Facebook and blog platforms. We use this analysis to derive insights about the state of the online public sphere and the differences between platforms and discussion frameworks. The objective of this research is to provide a systematic framework for the semi-automated discourse quality analysis of large datasets, and in applying this framework, to yield insight into the structure and features of political discussions online. As such, we conclude that structure, as in a blog, certainly adds to the democratic quality of a discussion. The objective is not to discourage citizens from dialoguing with their representatives on social media platforms such as Facebook, but to raise awareness to several key points. First, there is a distinction between voting democracy and participatory democracy, and attention must be given to the way in which the latter takes place in the online sphere. Second, the expectation that citizens may have that Facebook commenting is a tool for democratic participation should be tempered. While it is not out of the question that quality deliberation could take place on Facebook, this likely would not take place accidentally. That is, effort must be made to take into account the way in which quality deliberative conversations are structured online, using this as inspiration for deliberative design.

Saboteurs in the House: The Effects of Disagreement on Speeches and Sentiments in Parliament
Resul Umit, Katrin Auel

As the members of the British House of Commons prepared to vote on the withdrawal from the European Union, they were under clear – but not necessarily converging – instructions from their principals. This article analyses the Brexit debates to explain how members of parliaments (MPs) behave on the plenary floor when they disagree with one or more of their principals. It finds that those disagree with their party leadership are likely to keep quiet in parliament, but when they do speak, they reveal highly negative sentiments. On the contrary, those who disagree with the people are rather outspoken, and their sentiments are significantly less negative. Disagreements with constituency do not reflect on speeches and sentiments in the plenary. These results come from two different but complementary tests on the effects of disagreement in the plenary. The first relates to speaking behavior in general. Here we analyze the effects on (a) whether MPs spoke or kept quiet in addition to (b) the number of times, (c) the number of bill stages, and finally (d) the number of words that they spoke during the debates. In applying these four measures, we aim to provide results that
are robust to alternative operationalizations of speaking in parliament. The article also provides a quantitative sentiment analysis, based on the frequency of words expressing disagreement-related feelings in the debates. By using the NRC Word-Emotion Association Lexicon, we are able to quantify the negative sentiment and four related emotions---anger, fear, disgust, and sadness---in MPs’ speeches.

When conflict fuels negativity. A comparative analysis of the tone of electoral campaigns worldwide
Maier, Jürgen; Nai, Alessandro

A growing body of research indicates that the share of negative campaign communication has been increased over time; some scholars even claim that the likelihood of people’s exposure to negative information has never been higher. This development often raises concerns as some research claims that extensive negativity---especially if carried out in an unfair, uncivil manner---poison politics and can undermine democracy by, e.g., fostering polarization, political cynicism, political intolerance, and demobilization. Although a lot of efforts have been made to investigate the distribution, the development, and effects of negative campaigning, we still know relatively little about the factors influencing the decision of political actors to prefer attacks over other campaign strategies. Most research in this field is focusing on micro-level determinants affecting individual cost-benefit calculations of going negative. Compared to this strand of research, the body of literature connecting the impact of macro-level constraints (or context variables) under which political actors campaign and the use of negativity is small. Furthermore, previous studies compare only a handful of countries, compare different contexts within a given country (usually the US), and restrict their analysis to a specific type of communication channel (e.g., televised ads). In sum, very little is known about what drives the use of negative campaigning during elections across different contexts. Our paper contributes to the emerging field of comparative political communication by assessing the conditions under which candidates competing in different countries and elections use negative campaigning techniques. We rely on a novel dataset that contains information about political communication in 64 elections that happened worldwide between June 2016 and March 2018, based on the expert judgments of more than 1,200 scholars. We test the assumption that the use of negative campaigning techniques is driven by conflicts fueled by determinants at four levels: the political system, the country’s culture and society, the nature of the electoral race, and the media coverage of the election. Our results show that differences in culture and society but also political systems do not drive negativity in a direct fashion. However, we find evidence that the character of political competition and the way the media covers campaigns is systematically related to the general tone of election campaigns. In particular, our results suggest that elections characterized with greater ideological distance between candidates tend to be more negative, and that competitiveness drives negativity upwards. Furthermore, personalized media coverage is associated with a lower use of negative campaigning, and the use of negative media frames is positively associated with negative campaigning. Finally, media coverage moderates the effect of other contextual dimensions: election campaigns are substantially more negative in case of policy-focused coverage in ethnically heterogeneous societies, when negative framing appears in individualistic societies, and when high infotainment is used during non-competitive races.
Panel 5: Deliberative qualities of user comments

Is there a connection between mediated public deliberation and the deliberative quality of subsequent user discussions?

Ines Engelmann & Hanna Marzinkowski

On news websites, mass media coverage is located next to audiences’ discussions. Thus, from a perspective of deliberative democracy, the question arises how more or less deliberative mass media content shapes a rational style in subsequent user discussions. Deliberation is defined as a debate that aims at producing reasonable, well-informed opinions in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information and claims made by fellow participants (Chambers, 2003: 309). It is argued that deliberative media content has salutary effects on citizens, because it provides a repository of diverging justifications for political positions and the audience can see it as a model for deliberative behavior in everyday life (Wessler, 2008: 5-7). But can we find empirical evidence for this assumption? Based on the prerequisite that users are willing to participate in comment sections (explanations for this kind of participation: Marzinkowski & Engelmann, 2018; Springer et al., 2015; Weber, 2014), users can perceive even a balanced article of opposing views as more or less biased (Yun & Park, 2011). Thus, users’ reactions in the comment section depend on the perceived article tenor as congruent or incongruent to their own opinions, known as the looking-glass effect and the hostile-media effect, whereas the first effect seems to occur more often (Schulz & Rössler, 2012). From a motivational perspective, disagreement with journalistic news presentation is a stronger motive for public opinion expression than agreement (e.g., Springer et al., 2015). According to the Spiral of Silence (Noelle-Neumann, 1980), some user groups only express their opinions when they agree with the article tenor, because they would otherwise fear isolation in comment sections (confirmed in online contexts: e.g., Yun & Park, 2011), while other user groups only express their opinions for reasons of a strong personality (Noelle-Neumann, 1980) and their need to correct potential biases in the public sphere (empirical evidence in online contexts: Rojas, 2010; Töpfl & Piwoni, 2015). Keeping the dynamics of user discussions in mind, we further differentiate between user comments directly relating to the news article (initial comments) and comments replying to other user comments (reply comments). Based on different theoretical explanations and contradictory possible outcomes in comment sections related to the covered position in an article, we ask: RQ: How are more or less balanced opinions and (non-)existing justifications in news articles related to the expressed opinions and justifications in initial and reply comments? The research question is investigated by a relational content analysis of 32 news articles, 2,711 initial and 3,054 reply comments on seven far-reaching German news websites. As the underlying issue, we chose the discussion between CDU and CSU about an “upper limit” for refugees, because this issue was broadly discussed in the public sphere from November 2015 to November 2016 in Germany. We coded speakers’ opinion to the upper refugee limit in articles (kα=1) and comments (kα=.48), their opinion to refugees in articles (kα=1) and comments (kα=.46) as well as the presence of a justification for an opinion (article: kα=.47; comments: kα=.51). First analyses indicate that opinions and justifications of journalistic news articles are not related to initial comments from a deliberative perspective, but initial comments are strongly related to reply comments. Implications of these results from different theoretical views are discussed and further analyses will have been conducted at the time of the conference in November.

Negotiating with others online: How users interact in comment sections and indicate approval and disapproval of others’ ideas

Küchler C., Naab, T.K.

Communication research has studied intensively how far online discussions fulfill theoretical-normative criteria of deliberative discourse: are multiple viewpoints represented in comment sections, are users responsive to each other, and how do they argue for their own ideas? We complement this research in two regards:
We take a users’ perspective and investigate which comments users perceive as valuable, deviant, or worth of negotiation through reciprocal engagement. Furthermore, we investigate how users express this perception of others’ comments. We do so by applying linguistic research on conflict strategies (e.g., Oetzel, 2003), which have mostly been researched for face-to-face interactions. We transfer these strategies to computer-mediated communication to further investigate how users negotiate disagreement by dominating, avoiding, obliging or integrating others positions in reply comments. In a qualitative analysis, 40 discussions below news articles on various topics across nine mainstream news websites and their respective Facebook pages were explored. Results show that users sanction other users’ comments positively or negatively by referring to the person of the author, to his or her argument, or to his or her style of interacting in the discussion – although positive reactions are rare. Users rather react negatively, showing their disagreement by correcting or even objecting others’ comments. They further differentiate between their perceived in- and outgroup to distinguish between “correct” and “incorrect” points of view. Directness of conflict is increased by a hostile wording or by personal attacks towards the commenter, e.g. insults or devaluation. By accusing others of being fake profiles, users undermine other users’ authenticity and diminish their credibility - this strategy is applied even if it is not clear whether the accused profile is fake. Consequently, commenters rather dominate their discussion partner instead of aiming for integration by considering and respecting the others’ viewpoints. Occasionally, users even avoid conversations online by putting them temporarily on hold or by trying to prevent negative feedback from others by thoroughly contextualizing their comment. Finally, users’ claims for more focused, civil, and expedient discussions are also shown by meta-discussions deviating from the original topic and complaining about the poor quality of user comments in general. Similarly, commenters are torn between the claim for a more empathic discussion on the one hand and a more fact-based discussion on the other hand. The presented results provide a fundamental categorization of the discursive strategies applied by lay users to negotiate norms in computer-mediated discussions. By applying and extending linguistic concepts from face-to-face research and by inducing complementary elements through the qualitative approach, the study provides a set of discursive strategies in online conflicts applicable to user comments as well as to further fields of communication research. In respect of the current media environment, the results offer a closer understanding of dynamics in discussion threads as well as the deliberative potential of the such.

Deliberative (dis)similarities in the comment section
Hanna Marzinkowski

Analyzing user comments can be useful in advancing our understanding of interpersonal political talk (Price, Nir, & Cappella, 2006). Comment threads are often analyzed for their deliberative potentials and pitfalls (e.g., Ksiazek, 2016; Rowe, 2015; Ruiz et al., 2011). Online deliberation research has derived several criteria from Habermas’ (2014) theory of communicative action. The most frequently operationalized is rationality (Friess & Eilders, 2015), which demands statements to be justified. This is because justifications are expected to increase statements’ persuasive power (Friess & Eilders, 2015) and adhere to the ideal of a rational-critical discourse (Habermas, 2014). While a lot of studies focus on the conditions in which deliberation evolves, little is known about the interactions between comments. From a normative perspective, we expect statements with a high deliberative quality to motivate other commentators to follow deliberative norms (Cappella, Price, & Nir, 2002). Similarly, contagion theory expects behavioral or emotional predispositions to spread from one speaker to the other (Hartman & Johnson, 1989; Hasford, Hardesty, & Kidwell, 2015). If one user comment presents a justified argument, the user replying to him might also want to justify his position: H1: User comments (not) including a justification are more likely to attract (un)justified responses. We conducted a manual content analysis of 6053 comments on articles from seven major German news outlets from November 2015 to November 2016. Comments were coded in a relational manner, identifying the original comment to each reply (κ=.93). Among other characteristics, we coded whether a comment was justified
(κα=.51). In order to test our hypothesis, we combine two methodological perspectives: If we look at the distributions on the level of a relation between an original comment and a reply, each original comment might be counted several times. Using ego-network based measures, we can look at the subset of direct replies and calculate only one value for each original comment. For our hypothesis, the EI-Index is a suitable measure (Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2013, p. 273-274). It varies on a scale from 1=perfect homophily (all replies in the subset resemble their original comment) to +1=perfect heterophily (all replies in the subset differ from their original comment). Looking at all replies, we see that both unjustified (64%, n=1463) and justified (55%, n=1591) original comments receive more similar than dissimilar replies (Chi²=117.45; φ=.20; p ≤ 0.001). In comparison, the mean EI-value is M=.21 (SD=.91, n=949) for unjustified and M=.01 (SD=.92, n=981) for justified original comments. In other words, unjustified original comments tend towards homophily, while justified original comments receive a mixture of justified and unjustified replies. Looking at the ego-networks of direct replies eliminates the effect we observed when looking at generalized distributions. So, we can only partially support our hypothesis for unjustified original comments. This example shows that there are different ways to measure the effects between an original comment and its replies. Network analysis enables us to look at the subsets of original comments and their direct replies. As a next step, we will continue this analysis with other deliberative and discourse-related criteria in order to strengthen our argument in favor of adding network measures, which we would like to discuss at the conference.

Panel 6: Deliberative interventions

Is uncivil communication always bad? Theoretical considerations towards a systematization of incivility in online discussions
Marike Bormann, Dominique Heinbach, Dennis Friess

The advent of the internet has stimulated numerous hopes that a digital public sphere could emerge where citizens are able to exchange their views on a broad range of relevant issues in a deliberative manner (e.g., Dahlgren, 2005). Even though there is less consensus among theorists what exactly constitutes deliberative debate (Bächtiger et al., 2010), most scholars would agree that deliberation has to take place in a civil and respectful atmosphere. In the current debate, the overflowing presence of incivility, especially in online discussions, is considered a major problem for deliberative discourse. In consequence, incivility has increasingly become an important subject for communication research. Several studies have found that most online discussions do not live up to the standards of deliberation but rather contain disrespectful and sometimes even hateful talk (e.g., Anderson et al., 2014). This is particularly problematic against the backdrop of empirical studies which show that incivility in online discussions can polarize readers’ attitudes (Anderson et al., 2014), increase aggressive cognitions and prejudices (Hsueh et al., 2015) and negatively affect the perceived quality of online news articles (Prochazka et al., 2018). In addition, incivility can distort users’ perceptions of public opinion (Lee & Jang, 2010) and inhibit their willingness to participate in online discussions (Yun & Park, 2011). However, to date, there is no consensus about how to conceptualize incivility in detail (Muddiman, 2017). Different studies have carried out various forms of differentiation of the incivility concept. For example, Su et al. (2018) distinguish between “rudeness” and “extreme incivility”, while Papa-Charissi (2004) distinguishes between “incivility” and “impoliteness” and argues that “robust and heated discussions” (p. 260) can also be advantageous for democratic discourse. Therefore, different forms of deviant communication are labelled as uncivil. The aim of this paper is to develop a systematization of incivility in online discussions based on a literature review. In particular, we set out to discuss the concept of incivility not only against the background of classical (e.g., Cohen, 1989) and less restrictive ideas of deliberative theory (e.g., Dryzek, 2000), but also against agonistic concepts of democracy (e.g., Mouffe, 2013). Thus, the paper argues that incivility is not always bad per se. We introduce a systematization of incivility that distinguishes different forms and types of uncivil communicative behavior and their potential consequences.
for online discussions. In order to do so, we draw on theoretical literature that emphasizes the agonistic and antagonistic dimensions of political discourse (e.g., Mouffe, 2013). From this, we receive the agonistic-antagonistic dimension, which allows an analytical separation of legitimized incivility towards an opponent and an anti-democratic incivility towards an enemy. Drawing on Su et al. (2018), we construct the personal-impersonal dimension, which allows to separate between incivility aiming at persons involved in the conversation (personal) or at reference objects or groups not involved (impersonal). The two theoretical dimensions construct a four-field matrix systematizing types of incivility. This will be discussed in more detail in the paper. By providing a differentiated systematization of incivility in the context of deliberation and agonistic concepts of democracy, we aim to draw a clearer picture of incivility in online discussions and to guide future incivility research.

Conceptualizing emergent citizenship norms as drivers of user interventions in disrupted online discussions
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Even though most news media sites as well as social media platforms apply professional moderation of their comment sections (e.g., Meyer & Carey, 2014), these communicative spaces often suffer from a low deliberative quality due to hate speech, incivility, expressed media hostility, and other disruptive online behavior. As the platforms struggle to tackle the problem, users increasingly take on the responsibility to restore favorable conditions for meaningful political online discussions. Against this background, this paper introduces the concept of online civic intervention, referring to a new form of political participation online that is committed to counteract disruptive online commenting. Yet, so far little is known about what motivates and characterizes individuals who engage in online civic intervention (see for an exception, e.g., Naab, 2016), although it is likely that individuals with dutiful citizenship norms (Dalton, 2008) and social media political efficacy (Velasquez & LaRose, 2015) are particularly predestined. We extend this research and assume that online civic intervention is driven by emergent citizenship norms, which individuals develop in social media environments. We argue that emergent citizenship norms are learned through social cognitive processes of observation and self-observation in online discussions (Bandura, 1977) and may be enforced when individuals perceive their participation to have democratically desirable effects (Authors). The emergent citizenship norms need to be further explored with inductive designs, but for now our conceptualization includes these first dimensions: 1) Contribution: Users socialized with social media may strongly value user contributions through political posts or comments for providing authenticity (Dylko & McCluskey, 2012) and easy-to-gather exemplifications (Brosius, 2003) that detach from abstract (mass media) depictions that may hinder to engage in the discourse. Contribution as citizenship norm is based on the idea that ideal citizens express their ideas to their online peers and help to understand abstract issues collaboratively. 2) Sharing: Sharing political online content is a rewarded behavior, not only because users can inform other users in this way, but also because the platform algorithms favor items with a large number of shares (Authors; Bucher, 2012). From that perspective, political content reception is no longer perceived as a solitary activity, but, when content is shared, as a citizenship norm that promotes informed communities on the meso-level and societal cohesion on the macro-level. 3) Publicness: Users may draw the conclusion that their contributions need to be visible not only for their peers but for potentially wider audiences (Litt, 2012). Even facing the risk of giving up their privacy (Swigger, 2012), “going public” may have become a citizenship norm due to a habitual use of social media (Litt, 2012). The citizenship norm of publicness implies that in order to have an impact on a significant number of others, political issues and opinions need to be accessible to audiences beyond one’s peer networks. In our paper, we suggest and discuss a theoretical model, which includes forms of online civic interventions that have already been subject of research and elaborate on the role emergent citizenship norms play explaining this new form of political participation.
Comment sections allow citizens to voice their personal perceptions of issues, learn about the opinions of others, and participate in public discussions. Nowadays, commenting on the news has become the most widespread form of citizen participation online (Newman et al., 2017). Several scholars have argued that comment sections could constitute deliberative public spheres (Ruiz et al., 2011). However, findings on the quality of user comments are inconsistent. While some studies found that comments meet some characteristics of deliberation (Rowe, 2015), others conclude that discussions are mainly characterized by incivility and polemics (Anderson et al., 2014). Today, the latter perspective has gained the upper hand. Controversial issues, such as migration, attract high volumes of uncivil comments and therefore may undermine democratic values. This fear is supported by empirical studies which have found that poor quality of user comments impedes readers’ perceptions of the credibility and quality of news articles (Dohle, 2017) and their public opinion perceptions (Lee & Jang, 2010). Additionally, these comments polarize readers’ political attitudes (Anderson et al., 2014) and make them write low-quality comments themselves (Hsueh et al., 2015). Thus, it is important to investigate how online user discussions can be civilized and live up to (at least some) standards of deliberation, such as civility or rationality. Comment moderation by professional moderators is often considered a measure to promote deliberation online (Wright & Street, 2007). From a deliberation perspective, moderators from media organizations increase the imbalance of power between the hosts and the participants. Additionally, such moderators often manage discussions in non-transparent ways, for example, by filtering or deleting comments without giving reasons (Ziegele & Jost, 2016). A potentially more democratic approach, which the current study investigates, is the moderation by users who try to engage uncivil behavior by performing counter speech. We define counter speech as the communicative interventions of users in heated, uncivil, or one-sided public discussions. These interventions aim at balancing the discussions, and they are guided by deliberative norms, such as civility, rationality, and reciprocity. An increasingly prominent counter speech collective is the Facebook movement #ichbinhier with roughly 40.000 members. #ichbinhier organize their activities in a secret Facebook group and then engage publicly in the comment sections of news media. The current study investigates whether such organized counter speech promotes deliberative discourse? Based on theoretical and empirical considerations on the impact of counter speech in online discussions, the study conducts an exploratory content analysis of user comments on Facebook. It draws on a random sample of comments by #ichbinhier-activists and normal users (n=600) as well as on a sample of replies to these comments (n=4,000). By comparing the deliberativeness of the replies to the comments of #ichbinhier-activists and normal users, the study can shed light on whether the interventions promote deliberative discourse. A large data set of more than 170,000 comments has already been collected with the help of data scientists. However, the coding procedure is still in progress, so the results will be presented at the conference in case of acceptance. In sum, the study contributes to the general question whether organized counter speech is an appropriate way of positively influencing public online discourse or whether it is just another form of organized ‘trolling’ behavior.