

**Call for papers for the Internet & Politics section, in addition to the ECPR general call for papers**

## **Section Internet and Politics: Towards New Concepts in Political Science?**

**ECPR General Conference Bordeaux, 4-7 September 2013**

**Deadline for paper proposals: February 1st, 2013; 300-word abstract required.**

Chairs: Dr. Fabienne Greffet, Pr. Andrea Römmele

The Internet and Politics field is becoming a more established subfield. Developments in webcampaigning, online political participation, e-deliberation, and e-government have changed the way we study politics. The Internet and Politics field have also brought new methodological developments, for instance through the use of “big data” for research purposes. Previous Internet and Politics Sections at ECPR General Conferences in Potsdam (2009) and Reykjavik (2011) have shown an interest of many political scientists in this field. Following the previous Internet and Politics sections in Potsdam and Reykjavik, this Section aims to investigate how the development of Internet studies is challenging and developing classic concepts in political science, such as “party”, “participation”, or “citizenship”. Conversely, we also want to consider how some of the main approaches within social science – such as gender studies, new institutionalism, constructivism or rational choice theory - are influencing the field of Internet and Politics. Thus, while welcoming empirical analyses, we particularly encourage paper proposals that focus on the deeper conceptual and theoretical foundations of Internet and Politics research. Overall we hope the section will show the relevance of Internet and Politics scholarship for addressing and understanding broader ongoing debates in the discipline and how our work can inform established fields of political enquiry .

This section is supported by the ECPR Standing Group on Internet & Politics.

**The section would welcome 11 panels. The titles and abstracts of the panels are included below. In each panel, about 4-5 papers would be presented; some other papers could also be discussed without being presented necessarily.**

**Paper proposals must be sent by Feb, 1<sup>st</sup> through the new ECPR website: <http://ecprnet.eu/Default.aspx>. You need to login or create an account to propose a paper. The guidelines can be found here: <http://new.ecprnet.eu/Documents/Conferences/General/2014BordeauxPaperProposalInstructions.pdf> as well as at the end of this document. Expected abstracts are 300 words maximum.**

**For more security, it is recommended to send a copy of your proposal to panel chairs, whose e-mail addresses are mentioned below (but keep in mind that any paper proposal must be submitted through “my ECPR”).**

**The conference would be held in Bordeaux, France, Sept 4-7, 2013. The panels would be the following (by alphabetical order):**

- **The Cyberspace and IR: Conceptual and Theoretical Considerations (chairs: Jan-Frederik Kremer, [jan-frederik.kremer@rub.de](mailto:jan-frederik.kremer@rub.de) and Benedikt Müller, [benedikt.mueller@cnslnets.com](mailto:benedikt.mueller@cnslnets.com); discussant: Andreas Schmidt)**

**Abstract:** Although the emergence and ever increasing diffusion of the cyberspace have most obviously significant implications for international politics, global economic activity and transnational social relations, there is still a cloudy spot in research in terms of addressing these implications on a conceptual and theoretical level. Therefore, this panel is designed, to bring together contributions that present their considerations on how to conceptually and theoretically explain the relationship of the cyberspace and international relations, to foster the academic debate in this regard. This goal will be achieved by bringing together papers that present approaches and frameworks that either deal with the general relation of IR and the cyberspace, or develop theoretical approaches to explain the dynamics of this relation in specific fields of activity (like cyber security, cyber warfare, diffusion of information and knowledge through the cyberspace, interconnectedness of economic and social activities through the cyberspace and so forth). Hence this panel aims at bringing together conceptual and theoretical papers on the relation of the cyberspace and IR (in terms of actors, spaces, fields of activity etc.), to foster and boost our understanding of the consequences and implications of the process of “cyberization” for states’ security, power positioning, interest achievement, diplomatic activity, commercial relations etc., as well as for economic and civil actors that are also affected by the “cyberization” of IR. Here,

“cyberization” of IR refers to the ongoing penetration of all different fields of activity of international relations by different mediums of the cyberspace on the one hand, and the growing dependence of actors in IR on infrastructure, instruments, and means offered by the cyberspace on the other hand.

- **Digital Government and the Data Deluge (chairs: Amanda Clarke, [amanda.erin.clarke@gmail.com](mailto:amanda.erin.clarke@gmail.com) and Helen Margetts, [helen.margetts@oii.ox.ac.uk](mailto:helen.margetts@oii.ox.ac.uk))**

**Abstract:** Internet-based platforms enable new forms of production, firm-client engagement, and data-driven decision-making, particularly through the generation and analysis of 'big data', drawing on non-traditional data sources. Typically tied into broader 'open government' and 'digital by default' agendas, governments around the world are attempting to capitalize on this potential, employing social media, releasing government data, and experimenting with big data and web-based co-production to improve services and policy making. While a number of highly enthusiastic, normative accounts describe these developments, we lack empirical data describing the drivers, processes, and outcomes of this latest wave of digital government in practice or the development of methods to study the structure of government or citizen-government interactions in these new contexts. Similarly, researchers have yet to explore the possible tensions between 'open data' and 'big data' agendas, or flesh out the implications that these initiatives have for models of public administration, government-citizen relations, and the shape and size of the public sector. This panel invites papers that address these empirical, methodological and theoretical gaps, providing much-needed attention to this emerging phase of digital era government.

- **E-Diplomacy between Promises and Reality (chair: Corneliu Bjola, [corneliu.bjola@qeh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:corneliu.bjola@qeh.ox.ac.uk); discussion: Marcus Holmes)**

**Abstract:** The recent spread of ediplomacy (i.e., the use of social media technologies to carry out diplomatic objectives) in foreign ministries is intended to bridge a long overdue digital gap in the practice of diplomacy. The adoption of ediplomacy nodes promise to create a revolution in the manner in which diplomats engage in information management, public diplomacy, strategy planning, international negotiations or even crisis management. Little is known yet of how actually ediplomacy works, who are its main users, what impact it has and most importantly, how ediplomacy interacts and shapes conventional methods of diplomatic interaction. The objective of this panel is to bridge this analytical gap by exploring the conditions under which ediplomacy informs, regulate or constrains foreign policy. To this end, the panel invites papers with strong theoretical and empirical components addressing questions regarding the policy contributions and normative implications of the application of ediplomacy in public diplomacy, strategic counterterrorist communication, cultural & consular affairs, or crisis management.

- **The Impact of Digital Technology on Contemporary Repertoires of Contention (chairs: François Briatte, [f.briatte@gmail.com](mailto:f.briatte@gmail.com) and Yana Breindl, [yana.breindl@sowi.uni-goettingen.de](mailto:yana.breindl@sowi.uni-goettingen.de); discussant: Mayo Fuster Morell)**

**Abstract:** Digital technologies have become a steady component of a vast range of protest movements, motivated by the widespread availability of Internet communications and apparent political power of social media. The use of technology-mediated communication in early transnational mobilization initiatives against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) or during WTO and G8 conferences has found an echo in more recent protests against the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) in campaigns against stricter copyright enforcement, and in large-scale events against social and economic inequality like 'Occupy', 'Indignados' or the 'Arab Spring'.

There is little agreement, however, over the nature and degree of effectiveness of digitally enabled repertoires of contention, as 'online' mobilization often builds on 'offline' interactions between technically literate and socially capable individuals. The limited empowerment capabilities of digital technologies seems to imply, instead, that traditional protest skills and resources, as well as political and social capital, remain central to analyzing mobilization over digital networks. To what extent, then, has activism actually gone 'digital', and what blends of technical, social and political skills are found among the individuals and organizations that lead and sustain protest events?

This panel would welcome empirical and theoretical papers that answer this question by examining the impact of digital technology and communication on contemporary repertoires of contention.

- **Internet and International Politics: Comparing Opportunities and Rising Challenges (chair: Andrea Calderaro, andrea.calderaro@eui.eu)**

**Abstract:** The consolidation of worldwide Internet practices calls for research looking at the influence that this scenario has on politics from a comparative and transnational perspective of analysis. We can observe a growing scholarly interest in how the Internet is increasingly influencing International Politics, especially by empowering local actors in the development of and the coordination around contentious issues – both locally and internationally. Recent key international events have illustrated this empirically. The recent streams of protests challenging authoritarian regimes have generated interest in the potentialities of the Internet in transition countries. Furthermore, new tools have been developed to support the rising of local voices and to connect these to a global audience. Within this framework, the debate on the opportunities offered by the Internet to protect Human Rights is rich of contributions addressing new opportunities and new challenges. However, despite a general agreement that the Internet influences International Politics along this line, further effort is demanded to clarify the nature and dynamics of such an influence. This panel calls for papers addressing novel research and empirical cases that capture the influence of the Internet on International Politics, as well as comparative research strategies exploring the use of internet-mediated communication across countries and political systems. The goal is to establish clear lines of dialogues between empirical research and innovative methodological approaches to new media and International Politics, with a main focus on contentious politics.

- **Offline and Online Political Participation: Comparing Forms and Logics (chairs: Thierry Vedel thierry.vedel@sciences-po.fr and Stéphanie Wojcik stephanie.wojcik@u-pec.fr; discussant: Darren Lilleker)**

**Abstract:** While the internet has given rise to new forms of political participation, whether it is radically reshaping politics is still debated. For some, online political participation is mostly an electronic replication of traditional forms of political participation with canvassing being replaced by email campaigns, meetings by online chats, etc. Some critics have even mocked a slacktivism, described as the illusion of having a political impact by simply joining a Facebook group. For others, the internet has deeper effects on politics. It reconfigures and globalizes political arenas, allows horizontal interaction among citizens, especially through social networks, and introduces genuinely new forms of political action such as hacktivism.

Beyond the question of forms, this panel aims at analyzing whether the internet changes the very nature of political participation around two main questions.

- Does online political participation bring new categories of citizens into the political process and contribute to an enlargement of the public sphere? Which resources and skills are mobilized by online political participation and how do these differ from offline political participation? Are the factors predicting online participation the same as the factors predicting offline participation?

- Are repertoires of political action substantially transformed by the internet? How political organizations have adapted to the internet and how this affects their internal functioning? How do offline and online political activities interact and are hybrid political organizations emerging?

Besides case-studies or survey-based papers documenting these questions, the panel will also welcome methodological or theoretical papers discussing the problems raised by comparisons of online and offline political participation, and their conceptual challenges. Which indicators are meaningful for such comparisons? Can the same techniques be implemented to study offline and online political participation? Are the analytical frameworks and categories which have been traditionally used for offline political participation still valid?

- **Partisanship and the New Media: The Effect of the Internet on the Stability of Political Attitudes (chairs: Ana S. Cardenal, anasofia.cardenal@gmail.com and Joan Balcells, jbalcells@uoc.edu; discussant: Marta Cantijoch)**

**Abstract:** Internet is transforming the media landscape and the way political information is flowing among citizens. On the one hand, the Net is multiplying to unlimited levels the amount and variety of information that can be accessed by citizens. On the other hand, Web 2.0 technologies and social networks are multiplying the possibilities of social interaction and promoting horizontal forms of political communication. This panel wants to know how use of the Internet is affecting the stability of political attitudes and electoral behaviour. In particular, this panel wants to know how Internet usage is affecting the one political attitude that is most responsible for the stability of the European electorates in the past last fifty years: partisanship. The aim of the panel is twofold. From a substantive perspective, the goal is to contribute to the debate as to how structural

factors, such as changes in the media environment, are affecting partisanship and the stability of the European electorates in general. From a methodological perspective, the goal is to encourage methodologically well-designed and innovative studies that are able to identify causal effects between internet usage and political attitudes and behaviour related to party identification.

- **Political Parties in the Digital Age: Has Everything Been Said? (chairs: Fabienne Greffet, Fabienne.Greffet@univ-lorraine.fr and Andrea Römmele, roemmele@hertie-school.org, discussant: Rachel Gibson)**

**Abstract:** The academic literature on the uses of the internet within political parties and for web campaigning has been extensively developed over the last 10 years. However, there is a lack of a general framework that would provide an analysis of the relationship between the use of digital tools and the way political parties are transformed, so that the concept of political party itself can be re-defined, if necessary. Therefore this panel addresses three questions to potential authors, encouraging them to present their research in a conceptual perspective addressing the definition of what political parties are now:

- How are internal organizations of parties challenged by the growing usage of digital technologies ? Is there a “deterritorialization” of politics, with for instance a weakening place of local branches and/or a reinforcement of certain kind of actors, such as some political communication staff? Can new people be reached through this usage, either widening or narrowing the potential audience and membership of political parties?
- To what extent are parties challenged and influenced by other groups in their use of technologies, either their counterparts, or collective action groups and social movements - that use digital tools intensely -, or even other organizations such as private companies? To what extent can some “organizational hybridity” (Chadwick, 2007) be observed?
- More broadly, do available theories and approaches in the field, such as the one on the “cartel party” (R.Katz and P.Mair) or the “cyber-party” (H.Margetts) cover the diversity of uses of digital tools within parties? Do the words “political activism”, or “political engagement” mean the same thing with digital technologies?

- **Public Opinion in the Internet Age (chairs: Matthew Wall, wallmt@tcd.ie and Laura Sudulich, sudulicm@tcd.ie; discussant: Matthew Wall)**

**Abstract:** The communication of information is foundational to politics and particularly to the formation of political attitudes and opinions. The Internet represents an addition to the traditional media menu of newspapers, radio and television, offering space with alternative modalities of information creation, consumption and exchange. The borderless nature of the internet allows for information to flow without the limits of national news media, while its structure allows for considerably greater fragmentation of content creation than in any previous medium. Thus, the web differs dramatically from traditional media in terms of both the nature of political information available and the manner in which individuals can interact with that information. Citizens, when using the Internet as a source of political information, are exposed to an unprecedented volume of news, opinions and views that transcend national traditional commentators. In the light of these developments, this panel seeks to bring together contributions on the topic of public opinion in the Internet age. In particular, we welcome empirically-oriented submissions evaluating whether and how the Internet interacts with traditional media in influencing citizens’ opinions regarding political institutions (at the national and supranational levels); political actors (including parties, candidates and office holders); and political issues (including referendum debates). Methodologically sophisticated and causally-oriented papers making innovative use of observational data as well as papers employing experimental and quasi-experimental designs are particularly welcome.

- **The Role of Online Media in Politics (chair: Alexander Trechsel, Alexander.Trechsel@eui.eu; discussant: Helen Margetts)**

**Abstract:** With the advent of modern information and communication technologies, and in particular with the internet, the longstanding relationship between media and politics has undergone profound changes. Never before was the flow of political information as strong as today. However, an ever growing part of this information is not produced by traditional media outlets, but by online channels of information (the blogosphere, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube etc.). The quality of political information produced by online media and channels of diffusion is, however, not always accurate and balanced. The phenomenon of political misinformation “from below” (and contrary to the role of propaganda “from above”) is not sufficiently explored by political science, sociology, communication studies and journalism studies. In this panel we seek theoretical as well as empirically grounded papers that address

questions such as how does the internet affect the quality of political information?; how does the internet change deliberation in the online public sphere?; how does online media consumption affect public opinion formation? what are the consequences of misinformation, hoaxes and rumors for elections and more generally for politics?

- **Young Citizens' Socially Mediated Voice in a Cold Economic Climate: Revising Equality and Online Participation** (chairs: **Brian Loader**, [brian.loader@york.ac.uk](mailto:brian.loader@york.ac.uk) and **Ariadne Vromen**, [ariane.vrodmen@sydney.edu.au](mailto:ariane.vrodmen@sydney.edu.au); discussant: **Michele Micheletti**)

**Abstract:** Recent protests and campaigns undertaken predominantly by young citizens in Europe, the Middle East and North America, have focused attention on the elective affinity of social media, unconventional political youth cultures and the alienation of a new generation of citizens. The early hyperbole and simplistic accounts of 'Twitter revolutions' have been appropriately critiqued by political scientists. However more general discussion of social media still retains a largely unchallenged set of assumptions about its inherent democratic properties and socialising capabilities for engaging young people. Yet such optimism either ignores the well established negative relationship between socio-economic inequality and levels of political participation or it discounts the importance of traditional political concepts such collective action, social justice, participation and the public sphere for democratic governance. Set against a context of high youth unemployment in many countries (e.g. 50% in Spain and Greece, 19% in the UK, 17% in Ireland) and skilled graduates increasingly entering precarious occupations, this panel seeks to explore how socially differentiated (class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality) young citizens interact with social media and are politically influenced by it in pluralistic ways. It will reflect on whether social media use for political engagement ameliorates young people's political inequality in a distinct period of time when they are experiencing increased social and economic precarity. The panel also seeks papers that will consider the value of research into social media as a means of informing our understanding of both contemporary normative values of young citizens and as evidence for emerging alternative models of political engagement.

## How to propose a Paper

### How to propose a paper:

- Paper proposers must have a myECPR account in order to submit a paper proposal.
- Participants will be able to propose papers to accepted Panels from 4 December 2012.
- Paper proposals are welcomed from both ECPR Member and Non Member institutions.
- Whilst proposers may submit more than one paper at this stage, the Academic Convenors will not accept more than one paper proposed by the same person.

### How to submit your paper proposal via MyECPR:

- 1) Log in to your myECPR account, or create an account [here](#).
- 2) Follow the links to the Bordeaux General Conference home page and then select 'Propose a Paper' from the menu.
- 3) From the dropdown box, select the Panel to which you wish to propose a paper.
- 4) Select 3-6 keywords from the list which best describe the field to which your paper relates (this is key to ensuring your paper is allocated to the correct Panel).
- 5) Upload/insert an abstract of no more than 300 words.
- 6) Provide the e-mail addresses of any co-authors to the paper. To enable us to find them in the system, these addresses must be the ones they have used to create their myECPR account (if they do not already have an account, please ask them to create one.)
- 7) Attach the full paper proposal in pdf format. (Please note, this can also be done at a later stage via myECPR under the 'My Events' page up until the deadline below.)

The deadline for paper proposals is **1 February 2013**.