

Internet and New forms of political participation

Conference

Lille (France), March 28-29th, 2019

With the support of the CERAPS (University of Lille), the CEDITEC (UPEC), the CEVIPOF (Free University of Brussels) and the CReSPo (Saint-Louis-Brussels University)

Call for papers

Deadlines :

- Deadline for proposals submission : December 31st, 2018
- Answer: January 15th, 2019
- Sending of communications: March 15th, 2019
- Conference: March 28th and 29th, 2019

Scientific Committee : Christine Barats (information and communication sciences, CEDITEC, Paris Descartes University), Julien Boyadjian (political science, CERAPS, Sciences Po Lille), Jean-Gabriel Contamin (political science, CERAPS, University of Lille), Anne Dister (Linguistics, Saint-Louis-Brussels University), Philippe Gambette (Computer Science, LIGM, Paris-Est Marne-la-Vallée University), Camille Kelbel (Political Science, CEVIPOF, Free University of Brussels), Raphaël Kies (University of Luxembourg), Jean-Marc Leblanc (language sciences, Ceditec, UPEC), Martine Legris-Revel (sociology, CERAPS, University of Lille), Regis Matuszewicz (political science, CERAPS, University of Reims), Eric Montigny (political science, University of Montreal), Marcel Moritz (law, CERAPS, University of Lille), Olivier Paye (political science, CRESPO, Saint-Louis-Brussels University), Marie Peres-Leblanc (ICT, CEDITEC, UPEC), Jean-Benoît Pilet (political science, CEVIPOF, Free University of Brussels), Thomas Soubiran (Methods of social sciences, CERAPS, University of Lille), Julien Talpin (political science, CERAPS, CNRS), Stephanie Wojcik (information and communication sciences, CEDITEC, UPEC).

Please submit your communication proposal through the link below:

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Call

Studies on offline political participation have for a long time demonstrated a deep participatory divide between those participating a lot – a minority – and a vast majority of citizens taking part to very few political activities, and not always according to "politician" considerations (Gaxie, 1978).

However, according to the upholders of the paradigm of the "(new) mobilization" (Hirzalla, van Zoonen and of Ridder, 2011), the lower costs of participation, made possible by the use of the internet, **would have favored the inclusion of new participants**, in particular stemming from social groups which some structural constraints held away from the "established and temporarily limited forms of participation" (Wojcik, 2011).

Field works, in the United States but also in Europe, have also highlight **the real -but limited- effects of internet on the mobilization of new participants** (Boulianne, 2015; Christensen, 2011). According to them, not only the social media - As YouTube, Twitter, Flickr, Facebook, Tumblr etc. - serve for political activities, but the very use of internet would increase votes or political participation (Lee and alii, 2013), so that even the time spent on "surfing everywhere" could increase political activity (Wright, 2012; Margetts, 2015; Vaccari and alii, 2015). Some put forward even that internet skills could be the main resource to participate online, independently of any political motivation (Krueger, 2002; Anduiza and alii, 2010; Borge and Cardenal, 2011; Vicente and Novo, 2014).

Thus the online activism would complete the offline activism, even if links between them should still be elucidated. For some, **online activism would open on new logics of commitment, the logics of the "connective" action**, different from the traditional logics of the collective action (Bimber and alii, 2005; Bennett and Segerberg, 2012), which would produce, as for the offline activism, sub-models of e-participation (Cantijoch and Gibson, 2013) refracting a plurality of links to politics, from the most distant to the most active ones (Leonard, 2009; Christensen, 2011; Life, 2014). Online activism would lead to the emergence of new modes of action (Granjon, 2002a; Peretti and Micheletti, 2004; Greffet and Wojcik, 2008; Badouard, 2013; Théviot and Mabi, 2014; Babeau, 2014; Halupka, 2014), and even to the emergence of new repertoires of actions (Granjon, 2002b, Van Laer and alii, 2010).

For others, **some forms of hybridization of online and offline activism would appear** (Wright, 2015). Online activism could contribute in particular to the revitalization of a set of former political practices, by opening them to new actors and to new ideas (Riehm and alii, 2014; Puschmann and alii, 2017). It could also subvert some of the traditional limits of the collective action (Margetts and alii, 2009). It would produce especially forms of hybridization between online and offline commitment, variable according to the modes of action and the individuals (Bastos and alii, 2015; Lee and Chan, 2016).

These new actors, engaged in new forms of action, **would speak politics differently**. On Internet and the social media, political commitment would indeed be expressed in new manners, more personal, more "expressive" (Monnoyer-Smith, 2011), more creative, associated with specific figures and formats (Babeau, 2014; Benson, 2017). New manners to speak and to engage politically would appear as much in the old rags of petitioning (Boure and Bousquet (2010, 2011); Hagen and alii, 2016) as on new platforms such as YouTube (Van Zoonen and alii, 2010).

Finally, these new political forms of participation -both new according to their authors as to their modes and their contents- **would be supposed, according to some academics, to be also more efficient**. Some studies demonstrated it in focusing on specific public policy

(Alathur, 2007; Navarria, 2010; Cotton, 2011; Panagiotopoulos, 2010; Morva, 2016). H.Margetts theorizes it more generally (Margetts, 2009). This is especially the main assertion of the "cyber-enthusiasts" who put forward the democratising virtues of new technologies (Lipset, 1960; Sola Pool, 1983) which question the centralized control of communications and which are supposed to offer to each an equal possibility to speak (Winner, 2014). An assertion that should have been attested by what has been presented as the "e-revolutions" of the "Arab world" (Lim, 2013; Howard and Hussain, 2013).

Nevertheless, **the conclusions of these works remain controversial**. To the cyberenthusiasts of the western democracies and to the partisans of the theory of the "mobilization", oppose the upholders of the thesis of the "normalization" or "reinforcement" (Margolis and Resnick, 2000), according to whom, for the main part, internet would change nothing to the political participation, or those supporting the theory of the "substitution" who deduce that the new technologies could feed in the "clicktivism" or "slacktivism": a "soft" or "lazy" activism (Shulman, 2009; Morozov, 2011) of individuals whose political activity would express itself only through internet (online petitions, Facebook groups, etc.) rather than bearing the costs and risks linked to offline activism (travel, public exposure, police repression, etc.).

Many works, focusing on different countries, media or modes of action, using different methodological devices, agree on the fact that, **for the main part, online activities are done by already offline active citizens**, so that Internet would offer new opportunities to those already active rather than it would lead previously passive citizens to mobilization. At best, it might be noticed a renewal in the youngest categories, but without any reduction of the social differences (Bimber, 1999 and 2001; Norris, 2003; Schlozman and alii, 2010; Van Laer, 2010; Dare and alii, 2013; Carlisle and Patton, 2013; Carman, 2014; Neihouser, 2014; Best and Krueger, 2005; Boyadjian, 2016; Escher and Riehm, 2017).

Some even assure that Internet would add a "digital divide" (Norris, 2001) to the "social divide", not only for technical reasons, but also and especially for cognitive reasons. Internet would aggravate the differences of activity between the citizens as far as only the most educated and the most interested in the politics would benefit from these new opportunities (Thomas and Streib, 2003; Weber and alii, 2003; Van Laer, 2010; Lindner and Riehm, 2011). One would notice an hyper concentration of the discussions (Dormagen and Boyadjian, 2016). One could speak of a "second-level digital divide" (Min, 2010). Especially as beyond differences in level of activity, the social and cultural inequalities would be distributed from now on within the online practices, in particular the online political practices (Cardon, 2010).

In the same way, one has questioned **the novelty of the collective-action repertoires** (Bellon, 2014), **that of the changes of contents and formats** (Himelboim and alii, 2009; Dias da Silva, 2015) - by putting forward, on one hand, the filiations with the former contents (Chartron and Rebillard, 2007), and, on the other hand, the weakly deliberative character of the online exchanges (Mutz and Wojcieszak, 2009; Poster, 1997) which look more like "flame wars" (Dery, 1994) than discussions in an habermassian space (Rheingold, 1994) - and, finally, **the novelty of their impacts**. Beyond the questioning of the impact of the new media in the recent movements of mobilization in the "Arab world" (Allal and Pierret, 2013; Contamin, 2016), some investigate their efficiency by comparing it in particular to that of the "traditional" modes of action (Hooghe and Marien, 2014; Escher and Riehm, 2017) or by underlining more globally the incapacity of these modes of action to reach the expected results in the "real" world (Shulman, 2005 and 2009; Coleman and Blumler, 2009).

These findings incite the partisans of the theory of the substitution to deepen this questioning. At first, they may question the political character of many of these exchanges

and these actions (Hoffman, on 2012). Then, they wonder if internet would not divert the citizens of the real political actions for the benefit of forms of participation via the social media which would have no real political consequences and which would especially serve to increase the feeling of utility and psychological comfort of those who perform them (Morozov, 2011; Harlow and Guo, 2014; Schumann and Klein, 2015). We would sign online petitions or we would be a member of political groups on Facebook rather than to contribute in long-term political campaigns (Joyce, 2010). We would discuss politics with our friends rather than get organized to influence directly the public authorities (Schlozman and alii, 2010).

However, **between these three positions, the conclusions remain contradictory**. When some put forward the politicizing role of Facebook (Chan, 2016), others demonstrate its role of "diversion" towards politics (Theocharis and Lowe, 2016). When some underline that Internet would not have allowed a rebalancing of the political participation between men and women (Friedman, 2005), others highlight an equalizer effect (Sheppard, 2015). **The difficulty in concluding is doubtless partly bound to the fact that methods designed to study the offline political participation are used to analyze the online participation**. On the contrary, one could suppose that the emergence, the multiplication and the diversification of the forms of "political" participation - the term itself would have to be discussed- online (Facebook, twitter, instagram, YouTube, discussion forums, comments, websites of online petition, more institutional platforms, ...), as the provision of new large big data for research can be used **to reframe these traditional questions, using new data and innovative methodological devices**.

This conference is precisely thought around this "bet". It aims at gathering field works which, from new data and/or from new methods, **re-question this now traditional issue of the effects of the new technologies on the political participation, according to various angles** :

- **that of the participants**, with in particular the question of the links between "participatory divide" and "digital divide"
- **that of the modes of actions**, with in particular the question of the links between online and offline actions
- **that of the contents**, focusing in particular on the possible renewal of the forms and formats of political enunciation
- **that of impacts**, with in particular the question of the forms of impact and of the articulation with the impact of other forms of political participation.

Interdisciplinary works will be particularly welcome as well as studies which concern varied national or international grounds. The ethical and legal dimension of this type of studies, which suppose to work on personal data sometimes partly without knowing those who produce them, will also be one of the stakes of this conference.

The proposals have to contain a title and a summary of maximum 1 000 words (without bibliography) which specify the question of research, describe the methods and the data and give an indication of the results. They must be sent **by December 31st, 2018** on the following link:

<https://goo.gl/forms/EQ8BRIQ7qs6W6uzB2>

Agreement of the scientific committee on the admissibility of the contribution: January 15th, 2019.

The authors of the accepted proposals will have to submit their articles before the date of the conference in order to facilitate the later publications.

Deadline to send the papers (50000 sign maximum, including bibliography) : March 15th, 2019.

The speaking languages will be French and English. If needed, a system of interpreting will be set up (from French towards English).

Possible support, subject to conditions, for travel and accommodation costs.

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