Title: A socio-technical approach to studying participation spaces

Bio: Ella Taylor-Smith is currently a third-year, full-time research student, in Edinburgh Napier University's Institute for Informatics and Digital Innovation, UK (e.taylor-smith@napier.ac.uk).

Abstract

The field of eParticipation has historically looked to Habermas' (1964) Public Sphere concept as a model for deliberative democracy, supported by the Internet. More recently, authors like Baym and Boyd (2012) have discussed the Public Sphere in terms of the relationship between social use of online spaces and political action. In parallel, ideas about democratic activities have been widened by identity politics and concepts like Bennett's self-actualizing citizen (2008). In this context, of moving from the ideal to the observed, this paper describes the use of a socio-technical framework to create holistic models of participation and eParticipation. These models can provide new insights into the relationship between the social, technical and economic elements of online and offline spaces and the democratic participation of people and groups.

Three case study groups are actively working to influence their local councils and environments. A socio-technical approach is used to explore the groups' use of online and offline spaces. Ethnographic methods are used to get to know the groups and identify participation spaces for each. These spaces include meeting rooms, public places, social media or other webpages and email communications. People's use of participation spaces is observed directly, online and offline. Their ideas and expectations about the spaces are further explored through conversations and interviews. Participation spaces vary according to their level of publicness, their economic model and behavioural norms such as formality/informality, as well as their relationship to the Internet. Each of the groups' participation spaces is investigated as a network of people and technologies: for example photographs on social media pages, taken and displayed by phones, are shared in a meeting.

A Socio-Technical Interaction Network (STIN) approach (Kling et al 2003) is used to analyse data and create models of the use of each participation space. First, the heterogeneous elements of each space, including people, groups, technologies, resources and expectations of behaviour, are identified. Next, the analysis explores how these elements fit together, systematically identifying technical, social and economic influences. The STIN approach is particularly useful for identifying the contexts of important relationships and current

exclusions in each participation space. This paper highlights the advantages of using the STIN approach to investigate the myriad factors affecting activist and community groups' use of online and offline spaces for participation. The models describe the practices and trade-offs of day to day participation, rather than idealised deliberation or social media revolutions.

Title: Self-reflection in privacy research on social network sites

Bio: Jo Pierson is Associate Professor in the Department of Media and Communication Studies at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium. Senior Researcher and staff member at the research centre iMinds-SMIT (jo.pierson@vub.ac.be).

Ralf de Wolf, PhD researcher, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium (ralf.de.wolf@vub.ac.be).

Ellen Vanderhoven, PhD, Ghent University, Belgium (ellen.vanderhoven@UGent.be).

Bettina Berendt, KU Leuven, Heverlee, Belgium (Bettina.Berendt@cs.kuleuven.be).

Tammy Schellens, Professor, Ghent University, Belgium (Tammy.Schellens@UGent.be).

Abstract

The increasing popularity of social media, in particular social network sites (SNS), has been a source of many privacy concerns. To mitigate these concerns and empower users, different forms of educational and technological solutions have been developed. Developing and evaluating such tools, however, cannot be considered a neutral process. Instead it is socially bound and interwoven with norms and values of the researchers.

The goal of the paper is to make the researchers' role transparent by highlighting five self-reflective questions when defining a privacy problem and developing solutions. To do this we draw on key lessons that were learned in an interdisciplinary four-year research project spanning various computational approaches, media and communication studies, sociology, educational studies, law, and behavioral economics. In the project we study and address security and privacy problems in SNS, with the aim of increasing users' awareness and control over their online information and underlining the responsibilities of service providers and third parties. Moreover, we develop and evaluate different sorts of privacy technologies, such as access control models, feedback and awareness tools and encryption tools, as well as educational packages. By highlighting different self-reflective questions during the research process, we argue, that it is possible to obtain the goal of making this research process more transparent.

The analysis is framed within the Science and Technology Studies (STS) perspective. Instead of focusing on the technical features of technologies, STS articulates and analyzes

how they are culturally and socially shaped. Specifically, in this paper, we focus on how privacy technologies and educational packages are shaped in the different steps of the research process. When developing solutions, we delineate two main stages: first one defines the problem for which one wants to develop a solution, and second one develops the solution. In both stages, different decisions need to be made. It is with regard to these decisions that we propose the different self-reflective questions. First, we discuss the defining of the privacy problem, pay attention to which actors are involved when defining the privacy problem and whether it is defined as a property or as a human right. Second, we focus on the solution for a problem defined earlier and discuss the issues related to increasing awareness and changing attitudes and behaviors. Finally, in the discussion, we propose a procedure, called "tool clinics", for further practical implementations of the proposed approach.

Title: Social Media Studies: Demarcating a new interdisciplinary research field

Bio: Jan Nolin is Professor at the University of Borås and research leader of the Social Media Studies research group, Sweden (Jan.Nolin@hb.se).

Nasrine Olson, Social Media Studies research group, University of Borås, Sweden

Abstract

Research relating to social media is still freshly evolving, therefore lacking solid institutional frame. Put bluntly, we are still struggling to understand how we ought to understand socio-cultural and socio-technological dimensions of platforms dealing with user-generated content. This paper is, as far as we know, the first attempt at describing the larger entity of social media research. We will start our analysis with a bibliometric overview in order to characterize the fragmented entity of social media research. The first few articles on topic seem to have been published in 2004. Research publications have expanded in quantity rapidly since then and cover a wide range of disciplines.

Social media research can be divided into 3 clusters. The first of these is oriented toward technological development. The second is concerned with social media as an instrument for marketing. The third of these, here called Social Media Studies (SMS), builds on traditions developed within the human and social sciences. It is this cluster that is the focus of the remainder of the paper. SMS is characterized as fragmented in four different aspects are identified and discussed: Societal value, Disciplines, View of technology, Unit of study.

In the conclusions of this paper the case is made for enacting SMS as an interdisciplinary research area. Involved researchers within the human and social sciences need particular arenas such as conferences, workshops, research groups and journals in order to counter current tendencies of fragmentation and polarization. Given such a development, this third cluster could and should serve as a substantial theoretical resource for research within the other clusters. Involved researchers in the first and second cluster have usually very little schooling in the complexities of "the social" even though this always appears as a guiding concept. SMS need not only improve organization within itself, there must also be strategies concerning the larger area of social media research.

Title: The Politics of Group Formation on Facebook: A quanti-qualitative approach to the study of connective/collective action

Bio: David J. Moats is an ESRC funded PhD Candidate in Sociology at Goldsmiths College, UK. Co-editor of the Centre for the Study of Invention and Social Process (CSISP) (d.moats@gold.ac.uk).

Abstract

Recent studies of social movements and social media have proposed that activist groups need no longer be defined by a shared identity or a cohesive message but only by the "connectivity" of the medium (Bennet and Segerberg 2011). Social media platforms allow participants to share, often contradictory, *personal* claims, which are then aggregated, rather than synthesized "collectively". Yet, others (Gerbaudo 2014) insist that some notion of collectivity or shared intentionality persists beyond these micro-practices. So are activist groups best analyzed as a set of organizational practices or in terms of shared identity or even ideology?

In this paper, I will make the case that this debate is largely a product of methodological tensions between quant and qual, macro and micro. Researchers tend to *either* perform a macro quantitative analysis of traceable practices and group dynamics *or* a micro qualitative analysis of the discursive content of messages, both of which produce very different conceptions of groups. To help bridge this gap, I will propose a potential 'quanti-quali' method (Latour and Venturini 2011), which allows fluidly zooming from the text of individual posts to relationships at the aggregate level. I will use this approach to analyze a set of Facebook Pages representing anti-nuclear groups and nuclear PR companies in the UK.

This involves combining two bi-partite network graphs 1) a social network connecting individual posts to users who interact on them and 2) a co-word network words and phrases to posts that they co-occur in. The two networks are then joined at the posts which are arranged into columns: users on the left, words on the right and posts in the centre arranged by timestamp. This map allows the researcher to clearly see the dynamic relationship between participation and content – which users gather around what types of content over time.

Using this tool, I find that groups on social media do not explicitly define themselves through programmatic statements ("we are ___", "we believe ___") but they are constantly defining themselves relationally to other groups, objects, events, public figures, through sharing and commenting about news stories, petitions, videos etc. It is through these little

debates about the framing of external content that the group's boundaries are policed. I also find that the design of Facebook encourages the promotion of certain types of content and modes of participation at the expense of others.