Patients as health stakeholders: the role of digital networks in patients’ empowerment

By framing a convergence between advocacy and activism, this empirical work investigates the role of online networking mechanisms in easing more or less active forms of engagement in critical action addressed at health care and management. The study looks at the affordances of patients’ advocacy from the lens of Digitally Networked Action (DNA) theory (Bennett and Segerberg 2013). As such, the study specifically looks at the role of digitally networked action in expanding health discourse practices in a way to intensify offline processes of information sharing and patient inclusions in policy making and research enhancement. In fact, by reframing rare-disease patient advocacy actors as counterpublics, this study tackles the question of how digital communication can help resource-poor patient organisations to 1) overcome informational obstacles to interactions among patients, health professionals, policy makers and lay people (intra-connectivity) and 2) ease public engagement via the creation of alliances among different patient communities through “boundary elements” (interconnectivity).

New recruits, the same old recruits or a digital dead end? Organisational ramifications of viral political posters and UK political parties on Facebook

This paper analyses the use of small, easily-shared images distributed by a variety of political parties in the UK over social networks. These images, labelled viral political posters (VPPs), closely resemble digital campaign posters and typically contain expressions of support for policies, critiques of opponents and image and consensus building messages. VPPs are theorised as potentially fulfilling a variety of (non-mutually exclusive) roles within the party organisational structure. In keeping with social networking spaces as platforms that promote accidental exposure to political messages, VPPs can be seen as reaching out to potential new supporters. This paper will seek to understand the extent to which each of these interpretations is valid by considering a dataset of VPPs collected from the social networking site Facebook. Beginning in September 2013 with collection ongoing, this dataset includes VPPs posted during the 2014 European Elections and encompasses nine political parties both with and without Parliamentary representation. In addition to the images themselves, metadata describing the number of comments, likes and shares VPPs received was also be collected.
Parties’ strategies and the issues of the voting decision: three cases of study
According to party competition theories, parties compete not only on the positions they take on issues but also on the issues they make salient to voters. However, not much is known about the ways in which voters respond to those moves and the impact they have on their voting behaviour. After a previous attempt to study the impact of these strategies in a cross-sectional and cross-temporal way, this paper tries to confirm the results by considering three cases of studies of Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The wealth of the data for these three countries allows studying the same phenomena with greater depth and detail. Furthermore, the approach allows having to make less assumptions.

12:35 – Discussant: Scott Davidson (Department of Media and Communication)

12:40- General discussion of the Paper