The times they are a-changin’ The digital transformation of ‘classic’ counter-public spheres

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Summary: Through digitalization the operating conditions of activists have radically changed. Against this background, a theoretical framework is provided to serve as a basis for a deeper understanding and empirical analysis of this structural change of counter-public spheres: On the social macro-level alternative media with a broader and in principle disperse audience, on the organizational meso-level collective mobilizations, which can be grasped as participatory public spheres, and on a individual micro-level myriad forms and manifestations of media activism. In an over-saturated media environment (net) campaigning constitutes more and more the essential communicative connection between counter-public spheres and their internal as well as external audiences, thus establishing a successful issue-orientated network. A synopsis of literature shows, that the process of digitalisation and emergence of campaigning has not only amplifying but also unintended negative effects for the production, representation and appropriation of counter-publicity.

Keywords: counter-public spheres, activism, movements, public sphere, digital media.

Introduction

Over the last decade the operating conditions of activists and organizations from the field of counterculture have radically changed. Socio-political, cultural as well as technical changes have played key roles within this process. From the viewpoint of communication, these changes not only have an impact

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on the constitution of counter-public spheres, but also influence their way of campaigning as one of their central means to gain mass media resonance as well as a collective identity. Against this background, this analysis provides a theoretical framework to serve as a basis for a deeper understanding and an empirical analysis of the structural change of counter-public spheres. It explores not only the impact of new Internet uses on the formation of counter-publicity in general, but also helps to understand the (new) communicative relationship between counter-public spheres and the public sphere dominated by mass media, which is mainly the result of net activism and campaigning. As the phenomenon of counter-public spheres is neither consistently nor sufficiently conceptually clarified, a short theoretical differentiation will firstly take place (section 1). Upon this a systematization of the various forms and functions of digital counter-public spheres will be carried out (section 2). While the potential of digital media in the new millennium increases, the danger of overloading and abuse grows since the activists are no more absolutely clear about the nature of the public sphere and the goals they are addressing through permanent campaigning (section 3).

The different levels of counter-public spheres and the role of campaigning

In a narrow sense, the term 'counter-public sphere' implies relatively diverse phenomena of public communication as well as of civil networks which are subsumed under this so often over-used but under-researched term. Basically, the term indicates specific publics centred around a specific social discourse or point of view aiming to bring their positions – which they feel are being marginalised and which are also often named 'counter-public' – to mass media by means of alternative media and actions and therewith gain public attention. An important reason for the construction of counter-public spheres is the subjective feeling of those affected, that information, messages, news etc. they produce do not find the way into the mainstream media. Since the 1960s and 1970s, the term is of applied to characterize actions of social movements (SM) (such as student, peace or environment movements) as well as alternative media (e.g. alternative press, free radio stations, community media). Contemporarily, non governmental organizations (NGOs), the various projects of media activists, or more recently blogs, social network sites and other participatory media outlets in the Internet like campaign platforms Avaaz, MoveOn or Campact are coming to the fore within the discussion of counter-public spheres.

The formation of counter-public spheres, however, can be even found much earlier. Early examples of existing practices of counter-public spheres can be seen in the leaflets of Protestant reformers in the fifteenth and sixteenth century or the media of the worker's movement at the end of the nineteenth century. For counter-public spheres in the modern sense a specific social and historical context can be identified which applies to the late 1960s and early 1970s and the associated SM and alternative media (Atton, 2002). Although these should not be seen as first organizational representations of social counter-public spheres, they still are the first non-established political actors whose actions were oriented according to mass media logic. Another proof of this is the fact that the term 'counter-public sphere' comes from the student movement and its nomenclature.

All forms counter-public spheres represent at least one of three propositions about public, media, and democracy: (1) Counter-publicity as a concern about democracy in the sense of a critical development of classic concepts of enlightenment, (2) authentic reporting from the point of view of those who are affected as critique about mass media, and (3) communication as a strategy to raise the emancipation of an audience (Oy, 2001). Right-wing extremist or real-socialistic communication activities 'can only be considered as 'counter-public spheres' regarding their structural aspects, since both alternative and movement media can be found here (e.g. Atton, 2006). However, the various forms of this kind of counter-publicity for different reasons don't correspond to the normative context of counter-public spheres in the sense of emancipatory communication that serves to strengthen democracy, neither regarding content nor praxis.

The increasing public and scientific attention to counter-public spheres can be explained – from an activist point of view – mainly by three contemporary social processes, which are all interconnected: Firstly, a commercial change which manifests itself within the increasing globalization and globalization criticism (e.g. Castells, 1996; 1997a; 1997b). Secondly, a social-political change which offers new possibilities for progressive (political) individual or organizational protagonists (Beck et al., 1994): The crisis of the (dominant) public sphere, on the one hand, enhances critical voices within the political public sphere and, on the other hand, allows non-established political actors such as citizens' initiatives, NGOs and SM to take over central functions within political processes, which are described as processes of subpolitics and subactivism (Beck, 1992; Bennett, 2003a; Bakardjieva, 2009). And thirdly, the rapid change of media

technologies which manifests itself within the Internet und its possibilities for connectivity (e.g. Palczewski, 2001; Downey & Fenton, 2003). These changes can be traced back from the perspective of communication and media studies to four fundamental meta-processes – mediatization, globalization, individualization, and commercialization that shape the current transformation of today's public and interpersonal communication (Krotz, 2007).

Traditional models of the public sphere allocate the role of counter-publicity to the civil society in general and specifically to SM, media and/or NGOs. Most empirical research therefore reduces phenomena of counter-public spheres to these certain institutions – understood as thickenings of social and communicative actions. However, from an analytical point of view this does not suffice since the concept of counter-public spheres cannot be reduced to certain persons, places or topics. In fact, the emergence of counter-public spheres is more complex: "(C)ounterpublics as discursive entities emerge in a multiple public sphere through constellation of persons, places and topics." (Asen, 2000: 430) Indeed, the term 'counter-public sphere' like the term 'public sphere' has to be seen not as monolithic but as multidimensional since both terms refer on one hand to different micro-, meso-, and macro-level of public communication (Habermas, 1992: 452f.; Ferree et al., 2002: 9ff.). On the other hand public spheres are constituted through functional (structure-related) as well as subjective (meaning-related) attributes. For this reason, we rather chose to use the plural form of counter-public spheres.

Thus, from a structural perspective the term refers to different form of publics (see figure 1): (1) First, it defines critical publics that perceive their positions as marginal in society. By means of alternative media and political campaigns they are targeting the coverage of the established mass media in order to enforce their political standing and perception (alternative public spheres). Left wing (alternative) media with a broader and in principle disperse audience and therefore with a greater power of agenda setting function as a kind of 'bridge-head' in the established mass media public for NSM and NGOs, like e.g. the German newspaper taz. According to its self-description from the outset (1979) this newspaper searches to develop a „concept of actual counter-public sphere“. European role models for the founders of the taz newspaper constitute primarily from the French *Libération* and the Italian *Lotta Continua*. Accompanying those alternative opinion leaders there a countless of smaller alternative media reaching local and segmented publics like e.g. local open channels or community media, which could be called alternative follow-up media. (2) Further,

on the organizational meso-level they are collective processes of learning and experience within alternative organizational structures and/or mobilizations in the broad field of civil society like e.g. SM, which can be grasped as participatory public spheres. (3) Additionally, on the micro-level of interactions and interpersonal communication myriad forms of (mostly individual) media interventions can be made out – mostly in the area of digital communication and media technologies – having its basis in alternative communication practice and which can be called media activism. These individual media practices are often part and/or supporting collective actions within the framework of movements and other participatory counter-publics, but not necessarily.

Figure 1: Structural dimensions of counter-public spheres

The boundaries between the various levels of public communication have to be regarded as being very blurry and contingent. This holds true for all kinds of public spheres especially for SM particular. In this case, for instance, movement publicity primarily constitutes the mass media perception and representation

and thus the public effect of the SM. In turn, the perception and response of an alternative public sphere in the established public sphere provide for the internal mobilization and stabilization of the SM. This process usually happens through the construction of a shared frame of interpretation which enables the SM not only to legitimate their actions but also to justify their protest against society (e.g. Snow & Benford, 1988). Hence, NSB are communicative systems whose entity and continuity are ensured – mostly in the framework of protest campaigns – by the medial fusion of movement actors, collective identity and mass media publicity. Thompson (1995) calls these processes “identity policy” which mostly deals with the visibility of the own position in the mass media (cf. also Castells, 1996; 1997a).

Because of structural and perceptual reasons, individuals and organizations from the field of counterculture like activists, SM, NGOs or alternative media have to prove themselves far more on the mediated market of opinions than established political actors (e.g. political parties, government bodies etc.): As they do not have direct access to the political system, they have to try, like all non-established political actors, to gain political influence in the form of resonance in the media system in return (Ferree et al., 2002: 9ff.). Ideally, they often pursue a double-strategy (e.g. Boyle & Schmierbach, 2009): In the first step, through the coverage of mass media as well as of different alternative media, the public is informed about alternative political claims. In a second step, interested recipients are to be mobilized for protest activities and integrated into the different counter-public spheres by movement media.² In order to reach these communication goals, Rucht (2004: 36ff.) distinguishes four ideal types of communication strategies: Abstention, attack, adaptation and alternatives. While the abstention- and attack-strategies entail communication activities within a collective actor and are directed at the internal communication, the adaptation- and alternatives-strategies are directed at the outside and therewith at the mass media.³

In modern media society collective as well as personal attention and sense of belonging are scarce resources therefore communicative activities of counter-publicity are increasingly organized in form of campaigns (cf. Ben-

² Besides the media- and audience-related communication goals, policy-related goals are to be distinguished. However, following the terminology of Goffman, a distinction can be made between the publicly visible front stage and a poorly visible backstage of political public sphere, on which other relationships between the actors and other types of political communication must be diagnosed (e.g. lobbying).

³ Strictly speaking, Rucht (2004) only refers to new social movements (SM). However, these media strategies can be seen as ideal types for all collective actors of counter publicity.

nett, 2004: 131ff.; Baringhorst, 2008). Campaigns are ostensibly mass media-orientated but have a dialectic character. On the one hand they refer to the complex relationship between counter-publicity and mass media: Manifestations of counter-public spheres are thinkable neither without alternative media (cf. Downing, 2001) nor without the media coverage of established mass media (e.g. Gitlin, 1980) as the different types of media initiate and maintain public communication. More and more the strategy of campaigning constitutes the essential communicative connection between counter-public spheres and their environment by addressing the relevant audiences both internally and externally, thus establishing a successful issue-orientated network. On the other hand, campaigns have always to be comprehended in the context of its carrier. In contrast to campaigns of the advertising industry and of established political actors, critical publics, understanding themselves as part of the normative tradition of counter- publicity, rather want to revitalize a critical civil society than to gain solely public attention.

The impact of digital media on the constitution of counter-publicity

Members of civil society had long been pioneers in using (new) media for political concerns. New online applications such as mailing lists, community networks, videoconferences, virtual communities, wikis, podcasts or blogs are increasingly used for political communication and organization. The Internet helped to realize the idea of a decentralized communication network which is maintained by civil society and can be understood as its medium of self-organization. Especially the impression that ICT applications are hastily appropriated by all non-established political actors leads increasingly to the assumption that society is facing a renaissance of critical voices in the public sphere and a 'digital update' of alternative media practice in general (e.g. Atton, 2002; Couldry, 2002). That way Graber et al. (2002: 93f.) observe:

“(T)he literature on interest networks and global activism seems particularly rich in examples of how various uses of the Internet and the Web have transformed activism, political pressure, and public communication strategies. (...) Research on civic organizations and political mobilization is characterized by findings showing potentially large effects of new media and for the breadth of directly applicable theory.”

Moreover, counter-public spheres can no longer be conceptualized without these new technical possibilities (e.g. Kahn & Kellner, 2004). They have their organizational basis predominately in their digital communication, which often takes place online. But digital media differ fundamentally from classic mass and organizational media (Jenkins & Thorburn, 2003). New features include the link-up of communication content (hypertextuality) and the compatibility with a variety of other media applications (multimediality). In addition to that, content can be generated and reworked by certain counter-public spheres as well as by individual recipients (interactivity). Digital media not only represent means of decreasing distance and speeding up communication. Theoretically, they also inherit the potential of an almost unlimited expansion coupled with interactivity (cyberspace) while connecting intern and extern target groups of political actors (connectivity).

In general, Internet applications can offer several functions for the constitution of counter-public spheres, especially the potential for a far reaching and rapid mobilization as Castells (1997b: 362) recognized more than a decade before Facebook: "It appears that it is in the realm of symbolic politics, and in the development of issue-oriented mobilization by groups and individuals outside the mainstream political system the new electronic communication may have the most dramatic effects." The world became aware of this for the first time during the protests held at the WTO conference in Seattle in December 1999. Due to their particular features, Internet applications used in this case can be predominately understood as instruments for transnational organization and communication which were indispensable for preparing and carrying out such a protest (e.g. Downey & Fenton, 2003). To transfer political protest from the real world into the cyberspace simultaneously changes a local event into a global one. However, actions of protest are predominately directed against military, political and commercial issues and often against the increasing commercialization of the Internet, too (Lievrouw, 2006). Political activism in the Internet intends to make the audience uncertain in order to provoke thought. In the face of present power relations this activism also aims at reallocating resources of power. Examples for high publicity in the last decade were projects from the field of 'cultural jamming' such as The Yes Men, Reclaim the Streets or RTMark (Cammaerts, 2007). These mostly subversive forms of protests were due to the resulting images and events more attractive for media reporting than any other form of media activism. Although these groups were mostly active since the 1980s it was only since the use of ICT based communication that they accelerated.

On an individual level the forms are too diverse to speak of the media activism in the age of the Internet (e.g. Meikle, 2002; Joyce, 2010). Therefore, (online) media activism cannot be understood as a movement with a collective identity that could be described empirically. Nevertheless as outlined before a great part of media activism could be understand as being part and/or supporting collective actions within the framework of movements. Instead it is more productive to conceptualize it as projects on a temporary basis which are individually understood as 'radical democracy' (e.g. Carroll & Hackett, 2006), 'net criticism' (e.g. Lovink, 2002) or 'communication guerrilla' (e.g. autonome a.f.r.i.k.a.-gruppe, 2002) etc. A good example for the many media outlets in the Internet, which focus on the basic participatory aspect of media activism without this ostentatious critical approach, is One World TV [<http://tv.oneworld.net/>]. Within the context of this independent Internet project, a public space is created which allows film journalists and producers without access to mass media to broadcast their work. The different video clips are linked thematically in order to create an interactive, loose network. Hence, participants of this project are not only able to communicate but also to exchange ideas via their productions.

Aside from these types of protest, subversion or collaboration, Internet applications particularly facilitate the public articulation of individual and collective actors from the counter-culture. As a result, several online formats that adapt and continue the functions of earlier alternative media came to exist at the end of the 1990s and continue to be successful until today (like Wikipedia, Indymedia etc.). On top of that, the fundamental lack of social relevance of the alternative press during the 1980s (e.g. Atton, 2002) seems to be overcome. Even though, these peer-to-peer networks did not replace the classic function of journalism from the perspective of public sphere theory – enabling public discourse – but they are able to amend public communication on a broad scale. However, even in this field one remarks the increasing institutionalization and commercialization (Hill & Hughes, 1998), one good case example being the history of online community networks (Dahlberg, 2004; Lovink & Riemens, 2004), which today seem out of time.

To sum up, it can be concluded from a theoretical perspective that the new Internet applications influence counter-public spheres and their relation to the public sphere on all levels of public communication: On a micro-level they are integrated into the political everyday life of media activists. On a meso-level they are used both in internal and in external communication of participatory

public spheres e.g. in the form of net campaigning. On a macro-level they change the overall appearance of the public sphere itself. From an 'enthusiastic' perspective concerning the power of digital media it is even assumed that the dividing line between public and counter-public spheres is shifting. In this context, it is crucial to determine how the current, ultra-saturated media environment impacts on activists' identities and the nature of counter-public spheres. Thus, when analyzing the consequences of the digitalization of counter-public spheres, the various contexts of public communication (regulation, production, representation, appropriation and identification) have to be considered in their interplay (du Gay et al., 1997). These issues are gaining rapidly in importance if we want to proof if the potential of digital media for connectivity, interactivity and collaboration as well as their rights of use (e.g. principles of open source and open publishing) are met in reality. Hamm & Zaiser (2000: 755, translation J.W.) were one of the first to call for research in this area:

"The question is, whether the rapid appropriation of new media implicated a qualitative change in alternative forms of communication and networks. How is the use of technological possibilities connected to the makers' political, cultural and social practice and the resulting products of left media on the Internet? How have the specific possibilities of information technology-speed, international accessibility with no printing and distribution costs resulted in a change in form, content and distribution of left-wing publications? Or do network publications reproduce already well-known forms based on existing correlations?"

A good area of research for this seems for us the different manifestations of net campaigning which also includes and foster different types of net activism (cf. Foot & Schneider, 2006), cumulating currently for example in considerable off-/online protests against ACTA throughout Europe. The rather abstract characteristics of digital media correspond within campaigning activities to some specific applications (see in more detail Berman & Mulligan, 2003; In der Smitten, 2008: 34ff.): Logos on Internet pages can for example point out that the owner sympathizes with certain political campaigns. In addition to that, 'disclosure' websites like Wikileaks are published which point out supposed unethical behavior of political and/or media organizations, expose relevant material and possibly call for protest and support campaign goals. Thus, online media are not only used for dispersing information but also for coordinating and communicating actions. Furthermore, campaigning platforms like Avaaz or Campact and their electronic chain letters and can reach due to the snowball effect as many addressees of a protest activity as possible. Whereas sit ins or on-

line strikes aim at crashing Internet pages and platforms by straining them with an overflow of simultaneous visits, hackers aim at reprogramming the source code. From an activist perspective these actions they were understood formerly as a form of 'electronic civil disobedience' (Wray, 1999).

Different goals of digital counter-public spheres can be identified in general. Each one has a certain form of action, organization and intervention, which overlap partly with classic counter-publicity (cf. Hackett, 2000: 70f.): (1) exertion of influence on the content and the news selection of established mass media, (2) critical observation of established media coverage, (3) organization of independent, democratic and participatory ways of communication, in order to strengthen marginalized publics as well as to open up new ways of communication independent of state and commercial influence, and (4) exertion of influence on the relationship between mass media and their audience – this is to be achieved through the raising of the media critical awareness of the audience, e.g. through media pedagogical or subversive measures.

Digital media seem generally to offer completely new possibilities of information, communication and mobilization, which can have a significant influence on the realization of a campaign. They don't only have a supporting function for concrete political campaigns, rather online-activities are to be seen nowadays as indistinguishable from offline-activities and vice versa (Berman & Mulligan, 2003; Bailey et al., 2008: 97ff.). Comparative research – especially with regard to the off- and online synergy and to the effects on the established mass media public – are still due. Most studies focus – maybe because of pragmatic reasons – either on the micro-, the meso- or the macro-level of public communication, and/or either on the off- or online dimension of campaigning. Formal analysis points out an on-/offline synergy of digital and analog media, which are set up in the framework of protest campaigns. Online-activities can be: (1) sending of online-information and/or newspaper articles to a mailing list or Internet forum, (2) setup of online-spaces to support the goals and activities of a group, (3) forwarding, spreading and linking of information from this online-space to other online spaces, and (4) initiation or participation in email-campaigns and online-petitions. Offline-activities comprise among others: (1) the participation in letter- or telephone-campaigns, (2) the participation in events or group meetings, or (3) the acceptance of certain duties like planning and taking part in real protest activities.

Comparing the audiences in general the number of active participants (users) of digital counter-publics is relatively small when compared to the whole population and to the traditional mass media and their audiences. As a result, it

remains to be seen if 'easy to use' counter-publicity on platforms like Avaaz or MoveOn – often criticized as slacktivism – is a temporary phenomenon, which will disappear like any trend, or if it fosters counter-publicity and critical attitudes in a society on a long run. In general, digital media do not seem to have been able to revive the concept of critique and a stable public counter-agenda setting along a wide front and on an international level (yet) – even though a few case studies show some successful political off-/online campaigns on a national level (e.g. for South Korea see Song, 2007) and emerging online-spaces for emancipatory communication, like discourses in mailing lists (Siapera, 2004; Zhang, 2006).

Besides these attempts of direct influence on public opinion and political decision making, there are also indirect structural influences observable in the sense of established journalism adopting information of campaigning activities (cf. also Harcup, 2005). From a journalists point of view online alternative media become particularly attractive and authentic for dealing with the increasing competition and the pressure of being up-to-date. In addition to that, online counter-public spheres and their issue orientated informational campaigning seem to offer additional information during times of crisis when journalistic enquiries are prevented by censorship and other obstacles (e.g. war reporting).⁴ Besides this take over of content also the appropriation of alternative media practices by established media has to be considered (Couldry, 2002). Thus, non hierarchical and interactive structures of counter-public online discussions and the identity producing communication and (virtual) community of formal alternative online platforms can already be found in slight variation and in many reproductions within the online content of mainstream mass media. However, the break up of one directional communication is used here in order to strengthen the relationship between customer and product. The genesis of the Internet itself can be used here as a piece of evidence. Exemplarily Oy (2002: 69) declares, that in the USA the development of computer technology would have not been possible without alternative counter-public spheres. In other words, the expressive power of counter-culture and processes of technological and social change are mutually dependent. However, a technological deterministic model is not plausible, as the expressive power of counter-public spheres cannot be reduced to the process of data exchange.

⁴ The law expert Jo Wilding reported her experience of working as a humanitarian helper during the Iraq war immediately to a correspondent. The German quality newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* adapted this report directly from an online discussion about the Iraq war, which took place in the alternative online-media *openDemocracy*.

Critical conclusions: Amplifying and negative effects for activists

Counter-publicity is regarded as important agent for social and political change as it raises and articulates critical societal and political issues and can be regarded as innovator in terms of their own media production and media related strategies. The diffusion of online and mobile communication and its integration in the everyday life of citizens also raises serious questions regarding the impact of new media on the constitution of counter-public spheres. There is ample research on what activists do with media, but there is very little known about what a media saturated society and the rapid evolution of media technologies does to the idea of counter-publicity and its impact on democracy and deliberation. In doing so this article provided a theoretical framework to better understand the complexity of counter-public spheres, which cannot be reduced to the everyday day contexts of activists without ignoring the broader macro-context and meso-organisational level of analysis.

Many authors put forward the idea that possibilities arising from digital media (might) lead to a new social relevance of counter-public sphere(s). In doing so it was often claimed in the late nineties that the potential of digital media, especially their usage and appropriation through actors from the field of counter-culture, should be analyzed empirically. This dimension seems to be, as briefly shown above, relatively well researched. Counter-public spheres can benefit from the participative structures of Internet uses in many ways: From the direct dialog between sender and receiver, national and international inter-connectedness, co-operation and co-ordination of campaigning activities, as well as the emergence of genuine alternative subcultures. Also the interconnect-edness of the movement participants' and the emergence of a mutual, collective identity as the central goals of counter-publicity have been shown empirically (e.g. Siaper, 2004).

However, taking the whole society into account, counter-publicity has (until now) been only been a communication process that amend public communication – e.g. attempts to take influence on the public opinion through campaigning and activism. Indeed there are currently countless critical publics like NGOs, protest parties, movements etc. (see the listings in Coyer et al., 2007; Bailey et al.; 2008; Lievrouw, 2010), but they are not per se constituting counter-public spheres in the sense of the previously outlined normative concepts of counter-publicity. Because not all of them provide emancipative, participative or collaborative strategies that serve to strengthen democracy, neither

regarding content nor praxis (see also from the perspective of critical theory Sandoval & Fuchs, 2010). Atton (2003), through his analysis of an British alternative information centre, gives an example of the various legal, commercial, and organizational limitations of counter-public spheres; areas of autonomous communication cannot be easily established offline as well as online. The autonomy of such critical public spheres, however, is with time constantly being threatened, e.g. by competition with commercial organizations – an impressive example for this is the increasing embedding of participatory elements in traditional journalism (participatory journalism) – or by rigid legal conditions, which is exemplarily shown through the regulatory conflict about community media in Europa.

While the potential of digital media increases, the danger of overloading and abuse grows, since the activists are no more absolutely clear about the nature of the public sphere and its normative functions they are addressing through their permanent campaigning (e.g. Bennett, 2004). Also it is plausible to assume that dominant mass media and established political actors benefit from the properties of digital media (e.g. better possibilities of audience research, data mining, information surveillance etc.), that means they gain more influence on public agenda and at the same time become more resistant against the exercising of influence of counter-public spheres (e.g. Downing, 2001). Digital media have on one hand amplifying effects like the growing publicity of non-established political actors like the SM and their campaigning but also unintended negative effects like e.g. the phenomenon of digital divide that can strengthen existent asymmetries within the public sphere or their soaring commercialization (e.g. Bennett, 2003b). These positive as well as negative dimensions of digital media should be reconsidered more in empirical research.

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