

Extended Program

12–13 March 2020 | NRW Forschungskolleg & Düsseldorf Institute for Internet and Democracy | Düsseldorf, Germany



Day One: 12th March 2020

12.00 am **Registration & Lunch**

1.15 pm **Welcome Notes**

Stefan Marschall

(Vice President for International Relations and Science Communications at the University of Düsseldorf)

Martin Mauve

(Spokesman of the NRW Forschungskolleg Online Participation and board member of the Düsseldorf Institute for Internet and Democracy)

1.30 pm **Panel 1: Governing the Community**

Chair: Tobias Escher

What It Means to Be a Good (Online) Host – Community and User Engagement at ZEIT ONLINE

Sebastian Horn & Julia Meyer (Zeit Online)

ZEIT ONLINE hosts one of the largest news communities in Europe and organizes a number of online and offline engagement formats, including a festival for young audiences and My Country Talks, a platform for political dialogue. In our presentation, we will talk about the value of these initiatives, how we manage them on such a large scale, and the role they will play for the future of our journalism.

RHETORic – Reducing Hate with Editorial Tools for Online Reactions and Comments

Michiel Nuytemans (Tree Company) & Steven Verlaak (Digital Lead at Mediahuis)

The objective of RHETORic is to provide tools for news editors and consumers to detect and counter polarisation on news websites and support civil discourse through interface elements and semi-automatic moderation of textual and visual comments. Because we believe that comments are not necessarily the endpoint of a story, broader strategies of user engagement are explored by developing engagement strategies and participatory news formats. RHETORic is a Belgian consortium consisting of the public broadcaster VRT, Mediahuis (publisher of leading news brands in the Benelux), The University of Leuven, and innovation companies Tree company, Textgain, and Wieni.

3.00 pm *Coffee Break*

3.30 pm **Panel 2: Complex Online Discussions beyond Comment Sections and Forums**

Chair: Martin Mauve

Towards Crowd-Scale Pareto-Optimal Decision-Making

Marc Klein (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

The world's most pressing problems are straining the limits of our current largely hierarchical decision-making processes, because they inherently require input from a wide diversity of experts and stakeholders. Social computing technologies have the potential to engage very large numbers of people, but fail badly however when applied to collective decision making about complex and contentious problems. This talk will give an overview of three research projects I have been pursuing to fill this gap: the Deliberatorium (for crowd-scale idea generation), the Bag of Lemons (for crowd-based idea filtering), and complex negotiation (for finding Pareto-optima agreements in domains with many options and participants).

Argument Technology: Theory, Engineering & Deployment

Chris Reed (University of Dundee)

The establishment and growth of computational models of argument over the past 25 years has been a uniquely fruitful collaboration crossing disciplinary boundaries from humanities, through social and computational sciences, to engineering. More recently, argument mining in particular has enjoyed phenomenal success, exploding from nothing to a worldwide industry in barely half a decade. Despite ingenious theoretical creativity and ground-breaking innovative collaborations, the area has, however, largely struggled to deliver products and applications to end users. Why should this be? What are the challenges and dynamics that have stymied better uptake, and what can be done to improve this translational aspect? This talk draws on the experiences from the Centre for Argument Technology in the development of philosophical and linguistic theory, in the engineering of integrative and interoperable systems, and in deploying with a variety of partners. The goal is to unpack some of the connections between formal and human argumentation, and to explore the challenges and opportunities laying ahead of the field of argument technology.

5.00 pm *Coffee Break*

5.30 pm **Remote Keynote: (Maybe)**

Alex Leavitt (Senior Researcher at Facebook)

6.15 **End of Day One**

6.30 pm *Conference Dinner (Brauhaus Schuhmacher / Oststraße 123)*

Day Two: 13th March 2020

9.00 am **Arrival & Coffee**

9.30 am **Panel 3: Online Discussions from a User and Community Manager Perspective**

Chair: Marc Ziegele

A Love-Hate Relationship: How People Feel about Online Discussions

Gina M. Masullo (University of Texas at Austin, USA)

Drawing from 10 focus groups in five countries, this talk pulls together what people feel is rewarding about the discussions that take place on online platforms – and what they find is lacking. Participants from Brazil, Germany, Malaysia, South Africa, and the United States showed remarkable commonality in what they like about online talk – (i.e., feeling connected to others and their community, getting help when they face problems). But they were equally congruent in what troubles them about online discussions – a lack of privacy, truthfulness, and civility. This talk offers suggestions for improving online discussions based on these findings and this broader area of research.

The Future of Comment Moderation: Challenges, Potentials, Requirements

Christian Strippel (Researcher at Freie Universität Berlin)

In recent years, the field of user comment moderation has changed considerably. It has gained in importance and has become more professional, but also struggles with precarious working conditions for many moderators. On the basis of current studies as well as our own research, this talk is dedicated to discovering which challenges the field of comment moderation faces and what is necessary to overcome those challenges.

11.00 am *Coffee Break*

11.30 am **Panel 4: Civil Society Perspective**

Chair: Dennis Friess

Digital Democracy Can Be Hacked!

Philip Kreissel (Social Media Analyst at #ichbinhier)

The talk will focus on how extremists and opportunist groups use flaws of social media and other digital participation platforms in order to promote their agenda. Beside this, the talk will also cover ideas how to counter those organized online behavior.

How Civil Society Shapes the Future of Online Discussions – An Overview

Hanna Gleiss (Project Manager at Das NETTZ)

Hate speech online has become a socially broad topic. Civil courage in digital spaces is more urgent than ever. Many civil society initiatives are committed to ensuring that everyone can move freely and securely on the Internet. Which approaches against hate speech and for constructive debates do exist? What are the most pressing challenges for these initiatives and what needs to be done? How can we work together more effectively (politics, platforms, research...)? Das NETTZ links actors, builds bridges and passes on demands from the civil society to decision-makers in politics and in tech platforms.

1.00 pm *Lunch & Poster Session*

2.00 pm **Panel 5: Online Discussions from a Law Perspective**

Chair: Frank Dietrich

Hate Speech, Law Enforcement and Civil Rights: The Struggle for a Cohesive Approach

Anna-Lena von Hodenberg (Managing Director at HateAid)

Discussions – social or political – nowadays take place online. Every citizen can exercise his or her right to freedom of expression and participate in discussions. But this freedom comes with a challenge: How can national law be enforced online? Law enforcement on the Internet has been almost undetectable in recent years. Executive and legislative bodies are not sensitised to the issue of digital violence, are not properly prepared and are often overwhelmed. As a result, the Internet is perceived as a legal vacuum and those affected are left helpless, while perpetrators can carry out illegal acts with impunity. A way must be found to allow online law enforcement and civil rights to coexist. HateAid is trying to fill that vacuum in Germany.

Parliaments, Court, Companies: Who Sets the Rules for Online Discussions (and Who Should)?

Matthias C. Kettemann (Senior Researcher at Leibniz-Institute for Media Studies/Hans-Bredow-Institute)

States have the primary responsibility to respect, protect and implement human rights. In online just as in offline spaces, the legislator has to provide norms ensuring that communications threaten neither individual rights nor destabilize social cohesion. Online communication platforms have a secondary responsibility not to violate human rights and to provide redress mechanisms when they do. Most have developed private normative orders that are progressively specific. Some platforms pursue financial or political goals and orient norms toward these. Others have attempted to establish legitimacy for their private norms by engaging with outside stakeholders in the norm production processes. As all relevant online discussion spaces are privately

owned and many affect the aggregation and articulation of ideas essential to democratic decision-making, these private norms have public impacts. This is when courts come in. These have to navigate between the freedoms of platforms, the rights of users and the free and democratic fundamental social order. Understanding how the rules for online discussions interact is thus key to normatively framing the future of democracy and society in hybrid communicative spaces.

3.30 pm *Coffee Break / Poster Session / Networking*

Poster & Demo Session (*first floor*)

Fridays for Future Meets Citizen Science

Anna Soßdorf & Witold Mucha

deliberate – Online Argumentation with Collaborative Filtering

Markus Brenneis

Insights in Natural Language Processing of Online Discussions

Philipp Grawe & Regina Stodden

Rethinking Discussions in Online-Articles

Christian Meter & Alexander Schneider

KOSMO – KI-Assisted Collective-Social Moderation of Online Discourses

Moritz Ritter (Liquid Democracy), Roland Wehking (Institute for Participatory Engineering), Marc Ziegele & Katharina Gerl (University of Düsseldorf)

Decision Making based on Argumentation

How can we use structured arguments to help people making decisions?

Björn Ebbinghaus

Interactive Moderation in Comment Sections

Marc Ziegele

4.30 pm **Panel 6: New Approaches for Online Discussions**

Chair: Christiane Eilders

Why One-to-One Online Discussions Are the Future of Online Discussions

Sabine Mehnert (Project Manager at Diskutier Mit Mir / Discuss with Me)

The Internet is an indispensable part of everyday life, particularly for younger generations. However, the internet is also perceived as a space of polarization with exposure to hate speech and other forms of aggression common in many-to-many communications. Especially political and controversial topics seem prone to attract unwanted attention in comment sections and on social media. This may reinforce a tendency towards the use of private messengers, where users engage mostly with like-minded peers. This talk presents the approach followed by Diskutier Mit Mir ("Discuss with Me"), offering anonymous one-to-one discussions, allowing participants to discuss topics they disagree on, while providing them with a safe digital space. Starting out with some theoretical background, the talk will present the basic idea of Diskutier Mit Mir as well as conceptual and technological challenges encountered during the development process.

A Case for Persistency in Online Argumentation

Martin Mauve, Christian Meter & Alexander Schneider (University of Düsseldorf)

In this position statement we will have a look at key problems in current online discussion, namely that arguments are unstructured and ephemeral. We will highlight this problem with an example and reason that arguments should be persistent resources that can be bookmarked, reused and improved upon. In order to support arguments as persistent resources there are several key challenges that need to be solved. We will sketch an architecture and its components that addresses those challenges.

6.00 pm **Closing Remarks**

6.15 pm **End of Conference**
