Political Protests, Social (Non-) Movements and the Role of Digital Media
Ph-D. -Workshop
April 24-25, 2013, Room WIE F-07, Wiesenstrasse 7/9, 8008 Zurich

URPP Asia and Europe

Outline:
This workshop is a pre-conference workshop to URPP's annual conference "Travelling Norms and the Politics of Contention," to be held October 25-26, 2013. It will deal with new social movements and non-movements (Asef Bayat) and new forms of political protest and their relationship to the use of digital media, in particular social network services, such as Twitter or Facebook. Presenters as well as the audience are expected to consist mostly of Ph.D. students, presenting and discussing their current research projects related to the subject of this workshop. The aim is to build a network of young researchers who are studying similar phenomena, but haven't yet got the chance to get connected and exchange about questions of common theories, concepts and methodologies due to the relative recency and actuality of this research field. Hence, keynote speeches are planned to be given by rather young but specialized scholars in their fields, in order to keep the hierarchical structures of the event as flat as possible and foster fruitful discussions on an equal footing.

Concepts: Public Sphere, Digital Media and Political Movements
Digital Media have created new repertoires of contention in various locations around the globe. Projects dealing with political contention and digital media in several regions of the world will be examined. The emergence of digital media has brought the relation between media and the public sphere into the focus of attention. Successful as well as failed movements trying to instill political change are making more and more use of digital media to communicate their ideas and feelings. Media and cultural studies as well as social sciences are asking how digital media and the public (sphere) relate to each other. On the level of conceptualizations, this conference tries to approach the question if the Habermasian concept of the public sphere still could offer an analytical tool to approach these changes or if we have to take into consideration more recent theoretical perspectives, such as the concept of social non-movements or the idea of digitally networked latent publics?

Regions: Asia, Near&Mid East, North Africa and Europe
The workshop will approach the aforementioned subjects through the burning lens of unconnected but structurally related events in various regions. In Japan the nuclear accident at Fukushima power plant in March 2011 has fostered significant transformations of former forms of anti-nuclear protest in Japan, making it better organized within Japan, better networked internationally and digitally and better linked to other forms of social, cultural and political protest. The popular uprisings of what has been called "the Arab spring" have come as a major surprise not only to Western politicians but also to experts and academics alike. The language used by protesters has been quite adequately described as post-ideological and, more particularly, as post-Islamist. At the same time, in Tunisia, Egypt as well as in Libya, Islamist movements and / or Islamic references appear to play a central role during processes of transition or regime change. In China the Jasmine Revolution was influenced by the events of the "Arab Spring". Here and in other contexts protesters are confronted with a large apparatus of censorship which is deployed by the state to control their actions. In

Europe, protests arouse against economic deprivation and social decline accompanied by neoliberal policies and the decline of social systems especially in Southern Europe following the financial crisis of 2008.

Methodology
Researchers working on the events in these regions face numerous methodological questions regarding the relationship of political protest, public spheres, protest movements and digital media. How should we compass the flood of digital information which is produced everyday in blogs, microblogs, forums etc.? How can we get access to data from social networks which are usually closed to non-members? What instruments do the various disciplines involved in investigating digital media sources employ to sort out the relevant data and structure it? How can we put digital media and political movements in relation to each other? What are the implications of the emergence of digital media for theoretical perspectives on social movements? Can they possibly change what can be considered as a social movement anyway?

The organizers of this workshop hope to get some outside input by means of two keynote talks by specialists in their respective fields. The conference will last for 1½ days, and will consist of 2 keynotes and 2 panels organized by URPP's Ph.D.-students, with 1-2 external and 1-2 internal Ph.D.-students per panel.

Institutional support: URPP Research Field 3; Prof. Dr. Benedikt Korf (Department of Geography), Prof. Dr. David Chiavacci (Institute of East Asian Studies), and Dr. Fabian Schäfer (URPP Asia and Europe)

Panels:

Panel 1: Political Protest across Regions
Panel 1 will offer a discussion of social media and protest in different regions. What are the differences between the "Jasmine Revolution" in China, the Anti-Nuclear Movement in Japan, the Toppling of the Ben-Ali-Regime in Tunisia and Online Protest in Europe? The discussion can offer insights about the chances and limits of comparative research and the transnational and transregional interdependencies of protest movements.

Ph.D. presentations:
Julia Obinger (Zürich)
Linda Maduz (Florenz)
Mihaly Gyimesi (Berlin)
Tobias Weiss (Zürich)

Panel 2: Digital Media and the Public Sphere
Panel 2 will focus on methodological questions. Digital Media and Protest Movements can be measured and interpreted by various disciplines. Methods of social science, media and cultural studies, history, regional studies as well as information science can be deployed. Interdisciplinary exchange will bring opportunities to assess the possibilities of combining various methodological approaches. In addition, panel 2 discusses the usefulness of Habermas' notion of the public sphere for the analysis of Digital Media and Protest Movements and asks how the concept of the public sphere is affected by the emergence of digital media in its normative and its empirical dimension.

Ph.D. presentations:
Amir Hamid (Zürich)
Sophia Ermert (Berlin)
Johanne Kuebler (Florenz)

Program:

April 24, 2013
10.00 - 10.15	Welcome Coffee
10.15 - 10.30	Welcome Address by Fabian Schäfer

Keynote Talk
10.30 - 11.30	Dr. Simona Grano: "The role of social media in recent environmental protests in China"

Panel 1: Political Protest across Regions
11.30 - 12.15	Tobias Weiss: "Post-Fukushima Japan: Transformationen in Zivilgesellschaft und Öffentlichkeit"
12.15 - 13.00	Mihaly Gyimesi: "The spread of "liquid organising" in Hungary - a research plan"
13.00 - 14.30	Lunch Break
14.30 - 15.15	Linda Maduz: „Social Protest and Political Change: Evidence from (South-) East Asia's Newly Democratized States"
15.15 - 15.30	Coffee Break
15.30 - 16.15	Julia Obinger: "The Case of "Amateur's Riot" in Tokyo: A (Non-) political (Non-)Movement?
19.00	Official Dinner (place to be announced)

April 25, 2013

Keynote Talk
09.00 - 10.00	Dr. Andreas Koller: "Beyond Micro-Publics: Public Sphere Analysis and Political Development"

Panel 2: Digital Media and the Public Sphere
10.00 - 10.45	Johanne Kuebler: "Opening the digital treasure chest - Of the use of digital methods for the analysis of contemporary social movements"
10.45 - 11.00	Coffee Break
11.00 - 11.45	Amir Hamid: "Body, Scripture, Hypertext - The Materiality of the Subject in the Islamist Discourse of the Transnational Arab Public Sphere"
11.45-12.30	Sophia Ermert: "Towards a Feminist Theory of the Public Sphere"
12.30 – 13.00	Plenary Discussion
13.00	Farewell Lunch