Right-Wing Digital News Infrastructures in Western Democracies
The use of digital media data in a comparative research project

Eva Mayerhöffer (Roskilde U.)
with Annett Heft, Curd Knüpfer, Susanne Reinhardt (Weizenbaum Institute)

Launch Digital Media Lab
Roskilde University
29.11.2018
Far-Right and Right-Wing Populist Alternative Online News Media

“Institutionalized journalism” (Wolf 2014) <=> blogs

Current, non-fictional and text-based content with a given periodicity

“Alternative media”

Far-right and right-wing populist views
• Actor-centered: user-based rather than topic-based data

• Structural:
  • Digital news architectures: Supply and demand of (right-wing) partisan online news content in different countries? (Mosca & Quaranta, 2016; Van Aelst et al., 2017)
  • (Actor) Networks: Do individual news sites form national and transnational networks and alliances of mutual recognition and support?

• Comparative: US, UK, GER, AUT, SWE, DEN
  • Context dependency (Brüggemann et al., 2014)
To cut a long story very short...

The more established right-wing actors and positions are in
a) the legacy media landscape and
b) the parliamentary sphere,

- the lower the supply & demand for alternative right-wing online news

- the lower the incentive for right-wing online news sites to establish transnational connections with like-minded sites (?)
**What kind of digital media data?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News outlet’s...</th>
<th>Supply</th>
<th>Demand</th>
<th>Network Links</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Webpage          | • Staff, address, financing, news categories, interactive features (standardized manual content analysis in MaxQDA)  
                  | • Number of articles (June 22-July 22) (Mediacloud)                   | Web traffic data – web site rank (Alexa)          | Hyperlinks to websites (Mediacloud data)           |
| Twitter account  | Number of tweets (June 1 to July 1, DMI-TCAT)                          | Number of followers (average, June 1 to July 1, DMI-TCAT) | Mentions/re-tweets; hyperlinks to websites (June 1 to July 1, DMI-TCAT) |
| Facebook page    |                                                                         | Number of page subscribers (2 Aug, manual coding) | Page likes (Python programming based on FBs API)    |
Why hyperlinks?

• Hyperlinking as strategic practise → hyperlink networks „set of web-based connections“ (Young/Leonardi, 2012, 233)

• Motivations: increase website traffic, enhance own reputation by linking to credible partners, enhance visibility of shared objectives, establish legitimacy

• Marginalized/extreme parties/groups more likely to establish links (trans-)nationally
Network of hyperlinks in tweets (Force Atlas 2 by Gephi), $n=66$ right-wing news sites: US (purple), Germany (green), Sweden (blue), UK (red), Denmark (yellow), Austria (orange)
Network of hyperlinks in homepages (Force Atlas 2), n=64 right-wing news sites: US (purple), Germany (green), Sweden (blue), UK (red), Denmark (yellow), Austria (orange)
What next?

…go even bigger: inclusion of indirect connections to identify “international integrators”

…go semantic (based on Mediacloud data)

…go smaller: qualitative study of those articles and tweets that integrate right-wing online news sites transnationally
Working papers


Heft, Annett/ Knüpfer, Curd/ Mayerhöffer, Eva/Reinhardt, Susanne (2018): Transnational networking and (dis-)integration among right-wing digital news ecologies in Europe and the US.