

## The construction of online (inter-/supra-) national identities in times of crisis

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PANEL ORGANIZERS: Massimiliano Demata (University of Turin) & Marlene Miglbauer (Pädagogische Hochschule Burgenland)

Recent events such as the COVID-19 epidemic, the Russia-Ukraine war and the violent challenges to the very foundations of democracies such as those in the USA (2021) and Brasil (2023) have raised questions about how shared or competing national identities are negotiated. Challenges to globalization and to supra-national organizations such as the EU have led to the potential rebordering and redefinition of national/local identities in the name, and under the impulse, of populism. Such questions and challenges are brought into sharp focus in the environment of social media, whose digital affordances often induce users to align themselves along polarized identities: by merging their own individual identities with shared, collective identities (e.g. Giddens 1991, Papacharissi 2002, Merchant 2006, Baym 2010, Gündüz 2017), the users' emotional attachment to a nation (whether their own nation and/or the nation they support in a conflict) is continually foregrounded.

Starting from, and expanding, recent literature (e.g. Gal et al. 2016, Bos et al. 2018; Mihelj & Jiménez-Martínez 2021), this panel intends to open up new ground on the critical assessment of the construction of national identities online as it aims to address the way discourses of the nation are presented in social media through their digital affordances. Topics may include, but are by no means limited to, the following:

- The construction of national identity discourses through the range of semiotic affordances of social media, e.g. how multimodal resources allow or induce the flagging of one's own national identity and build "ambient affiliation";
- 'Flagging the nation', or how national flags and other signifiers are used to signal support of certain nations, causes and national identities;
- Showing stance via emoji use in supporting and/or contesting national identities.

Abstracts addressing data from social media platforms (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Reddit, etc.) and addressing digital affordances such as flags, memes, emojis, gifs, pictures, reels are all welcome.

### References

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- Gal, N., Shifman, L., & Kampf, Z. (2016). "It gets better: Internet memes and the construction of collective identity." *New Media & Society* 18(8): 1698-1714.
- Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self Identity: self and society in the late modern age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gündüz U. (2017) "The Effect of Social Media on Identity Construction." *Mediterranean Journal of Social Science* 8(5): 85-92.
- Merchant, G. (2006) "Identity, Social Networks and Online Communication." *E-Learning* 3(2): 235.
- Mihelj, S. & Jiménez-Martínez, C. (2021) "Digital nationalism: Understanding the role of digital media in the rise of 'new' nationalism." *Nations and Nationalism* 27:331-346.
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So far, four abstracts have been submitted to our pre-call:

1. Veronika Koller (Lancaster University), "Real and warm": Using multimodality to elicit emotion among supporters of Denmark's far-right parties online.
2. Kateryna Pilyarchuk (University of Klagenfurt), "If it weren't for Ukraine, we would have defeated NATO long ago". Using internet memes to delegitimize Russian propaganda and narrate Ukrainian national identity.
3. Ewelina Prazmo (Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin) & Rafał Augustyn (Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin), Multimodal Analysis of Independence March Posters in Poland: Ideological Appropriation of National Symbols through the Lens of Conceptual Integration Theory.

4. Valeria Reggi (University of Bologna) "I defend my flag". Nationalism and leadership in the online discursive strategies of Fratelli d'Italia and Rassemblement National. A multimodal study

We expect more abstracts to be submitted. Provided their quality is high, our panel, if accepted, will probably need sessions.

**Primary authors:** Prof. MIGLBAUER, Marlene (Pädagogische Hochschule Burgenland); Prof. DEMATA, Massimiliano (University of Turin)

**Presenters:** Prof. MIGLBAUER, Marlene (Pädagogische Hochschule Burgenland); Prof. DEMATA, Massimiliano (University of Turin)