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The electronic public sphere of NGOs addressing digital society risks

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1. Research problem / statement

➢ *Production of democratic risks* of digital society is creating an electronic public sphere characterised by a new forms of non-governmental organisations participation.*

* digital inequality, internet control, commodification of internet, technocratic e-governance and fake e-participation

2. Research questions

(1) What digital activities are practised by non-governmental organisations in the field of digitalisation of society?

(2) Which are new forms of digital practices created by non-governmental organisations?

(3) What are characteristics of digital communication among non-governmental organisations?

3. Research model
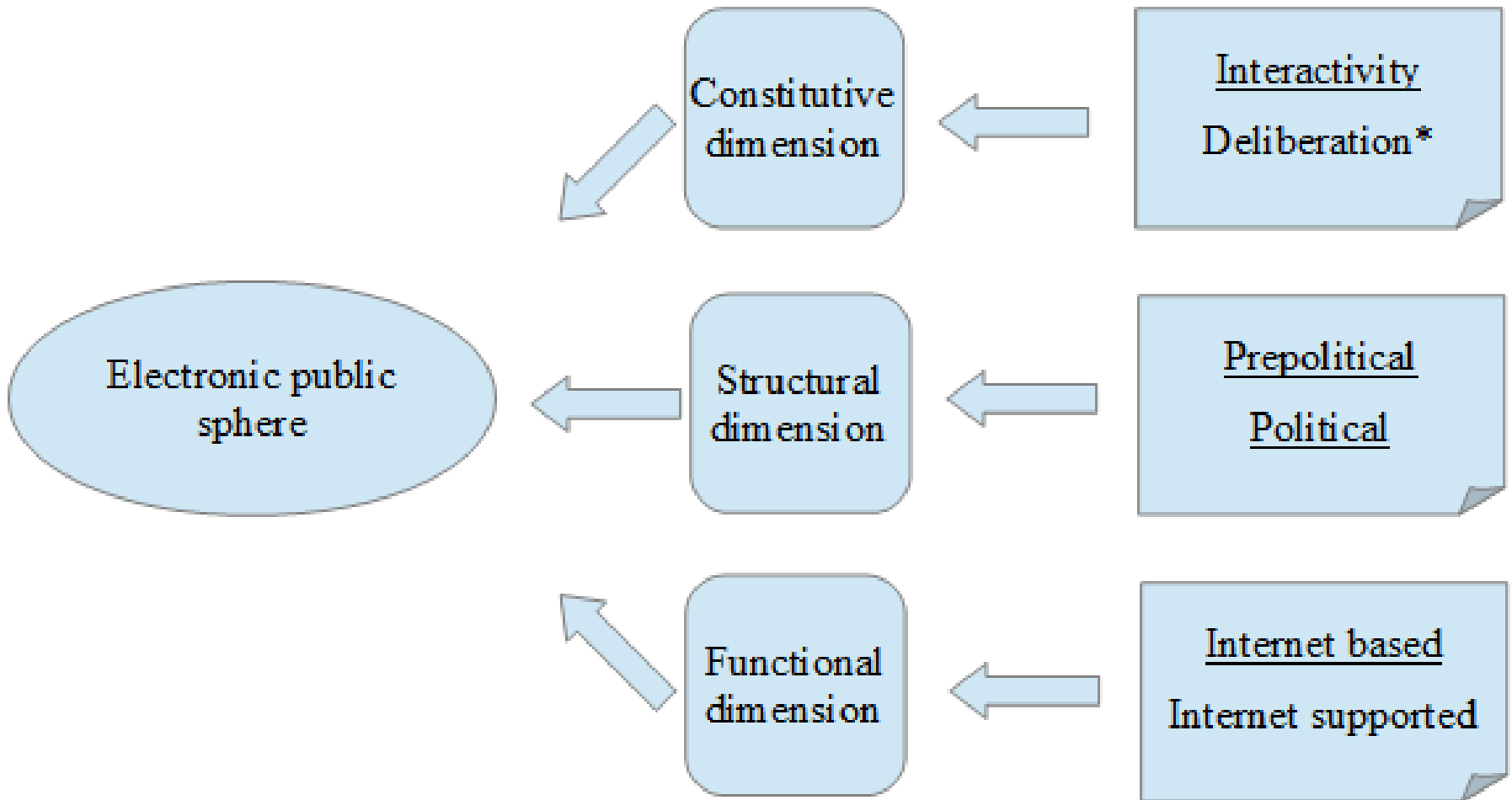
4. On-line survey implementation

- The first phase in August 2015 targeting Slovenian NGOs;

- The second phase in August 2017 targeting European NGOs;

- Directors and presidents of Slovenian NGOs and policy and communication officers in the European NGOs;

- 23 valid responses from Slovenian NGOs and 13 from European NGOs;

- Large proportion from the European network EDRi and national Network of NGOs for the inclusive information society (NVO-VID);

- The non-probability sample of surveyed NGOs, the initial results of the survey are not representative.

5. Findings: types of digital NGOs

	Operational NGOs	Campaigning NGOs
Prepolitical activities performed on the Internet	Mean = 3.8	Mean = 4.1
Variables above 4 (often)	information	information analysis networking recruitment
Political activities performed on the Internet	Mean = 3.3	Mean = 4
Variables above 4 (often)	mobilisation awareness	awareness mobilisation lobbying advocacy
Digital tools created for prepolitical activities		
Variables above 50 %	project tasks project opportunities fundraising education	project tasks project opportunities fundraising
Digital tools created for political activities		
Variables above 50 %	expressing opinions	expressing opinions public information petitioning monitoring legislation social media activism
Areas of digitalisation of society	Digital equality	Internet control Internet commodification

6. Findings: digital NGOs' public space

Electronic public sphere of organized presence		
No. of digital contacts with NGOs	0 − 5 (55 %)	0 − 5 (54 %)
	16+ (30 %)	6 − 15 (45 %)
Publishing an on-line content from NGOs	daily (40 %)	daily (36 %)
	monthly (55 %)	monthly (63 %)
Origin of an on-line content published	similar NGOs (68 %)	similar NGOs (73 %)
No. of NGOs in digital society field collaborated with	1 − 5 (50 %)	1 − 5 (36 %)
	11+ (35 %)	16+ (63 %)

◯ - networking effect?

7. Implications for theory

➢ Campaigning type of digital NGOs supports the pluralist model of democracy;

➢ Operational type of NGOs are using the Internet for own performance purposes, not clear relation to commodification of the public sphere suggested by the critical theory;

➢ Cyber utopian visions funded in digital NGOs, the actual social and policy impact within the scope of cyber realist views;

➢ Digital interaction confirms the existence of a specific digital space of NGOs (co-existence of multi-public spheres);

➢ Digital NGOs observed are forming the type of the public sphere of organized presence, where different types of digital NGOs coexists.

8. Further research

➢ Increasing the number of Slovene and European NGOs in the sample;

➢ Identifying correlations among variables within Slovene and European sample of NGOs;

➢ Identifying deliberative dimensions of digital NGOs public sphere;

➢ Exploring sub-public/sub-politics aspects of digital NGOs communication;

➢ Assessing social and policy change created by NGOs when addressing risks of digital society.

Focused interviews, Package for Large Network Analysis (Pajek) and NGOs web sites/social media profiles analysis.

THANK YOU!

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