DIGITAL HETEROTOPIAS AS NEW SPACES FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND POLITICAL EDUCATION IN THE INTERNET AGE

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Abstract

This paper poses questions as to the characteristics of new forms of political participation in the digital era and what the implications of this might be in relation to education theory. The main empirical foundations for the analysis come from the research project Communicative Publics in Cyberspace, supported by the results of other studies focusing on the Occupy movement, the Bersih movement in Malaysia and the Spanish Indignadas. The characteristics which have emerged in relation to these new forms of political participation include emotions and widespread concern as a starting point, togetherness, translocality and networked experiences.

While the digital networks are not the cause for the emergence of political participation, they do play an important role in the initiation and promotion of a «culture of autonomy», as Manuel Castells puts it, due to their specific structures (Castells 2012, 221). To round off the paper, the new challenges will be outlined which arise for democratic competence as seen from the perspective of the characteristics identified in relation to political participation.

Keywords: Digital heterotopias, social movements, participation, political education

Introduction:

Digital networked media are currently under debate as new instruments of and spaces for political participation, both from a theoretical and a political perspective. In his (1999) essay in the journal Media Studies, Hans Magnus Enzensberger pointed out the unique opportunities afforded by electronic media:

For the first time in history, the media are making possible mass participation in a social and socialized productive process, the practical

means of which are in the hands of the masses themselves (Enzensberger 1999, 69).[23]

The one-to-many form of communication provided by traditional mass media is being displaced by many-to-many communication (Jenkins/Thorburn 2004, 2) in digital networked media, with the result that the distinction between sender and receiver is disappearing. The possibility of »many« helping shape what appears in the media has developed into opportunities to initiate political processes which are not necessarily restricted to cyberspace.

According to Henry Jenkins and David Thorburn, digital networked media can be seen as a second phase of participatory media, the precursors of which were underground newspapers, grassroots videos and autonomous radio stations (ibid., 11). The democratization effect attributed to networked media has not gone unchallenged, however; there always were and still are voices insisting that political involvement developed in the net would be better invested in political action offline (ibid., 8.). This position implies that it is a case of either/or, as it differentiates strictly between political participation in the net and political participation beyond the net, in so-called »real life«. This dualistic position is, however, suspect in view of the mediatization of modern society, considering the extent to which media have permeated every aspect of our social and cultural lives (Krotz 2010, 106/Hepp 2010, 67ff.). And once a society has been mediatized, social behaviour, and with it political participation, should always be investigated with respect to its potential interfaces with digital networks. An analysis of political participation in the internet age from the perspective of media studies, as envisioned for this paper, has implications for educational discourse in keeping with Wolfgang Klafki. As Klafki put it, »Bildung« or education is «both a pedagogical and a political concept» (Klafki 1998, 239). He continues by saying that education should be understood as our «adoption of the issues and problems of our historically established present and emerging future which concern both us and our fellow human beings» (ibid.), empowering us «to help fashion our common cultural, social and political relations» (ibid.).

Seen from the perspective of media studies, the interplay between media structures and participatory action is brought to the fore, also with a view to suggesting possible goals for political education in the context of digital networks. The theoretical and practical implications for education which this particular perspective entails will be outlined at the end of the paper. The leading questions are therefore:

[23] Enzensberger primarily associates digital networked media with electronic media, as becomes clear from his subsequent argumentation.

- What are the characteristics of new forms of political participation in the age of the internet?
- What role does the internet itself play in generating these characteristics?
- What does democratic competence mean in the context of digital media?

A central theoretical point of reference for this analysis is the approach developed by Manuel Castells in his book Network of Outrage and Hope. Social Movements in the Internet Age (Castells 2012) which sets the new forms of political participation against the backdrop of a mediatized society instead of dividing them up into political actions in digital networks and in more traditional contexts. Other theoretical benchmarks include Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia (Foucault 1992), which illuminates the character of new political arenas within and beyond the digital media, and the Rhizome concept developed by Deleuze/Guattari (Deleuze/Guattari 1977), which describes an essential property of the structure of new political forms. The primary source of empirical evidence is the study Communicative Publics in Cyberspace,[24] an investigation of recent political movements in the Middle East and North Africa; this is supported by the results of other studies and newspaper reports on the worldwide Occupy movement, the Bersih movement in Malaysia, the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul and the Spanish Indignadas.

1. Political participation as a heterotopic movement supported by digital media

Political scientist Dieter Rucht defines political participation, in relation to forms of protest, as «publically visible actions … , by which non-governmental groups and organizations present a political and social concern accompanied by criticism or resistance» (Rucht 2012, 6). Rucht developed this definition in response to the student movement in the 1960s and 1970s, the feminist movement and the anti-nuclear power movement. His definition also covers aspects of new political forms in the internet age but it needs to be developed further, particularly with respect to the role of networked media as components of these political forms. Rucht believes that the media have an effect on «modern techniques of protest» (ibid., 10) to the extent that these techniques, in his view, take their bearings from the question as to

[24] Research team: Nicole Duller, Katja Koren Ošljak, Christina Schachtner, Heidrun Stückler. The project (2009-2013) was supported by the Austrian Science Fund and the VW Foundation as part of the study on *Subject Constructions and Digital Culture* carried out in cooperation with research teams at the universities of Bremen, Munster and the TU Hamburg-Harburg. The final results were published by Transcript Verlag in the book *Digitale Subjekte. Praktiken der Subjektivierung* (2013).

«whether they are suitable for staging and visualization in the media» (ibid.). The link between social action and networked media in new political forms is much more varied, however, as illustrated (1) in the emergence of a new political awareness and changed political visions and (2) in the mobilization and organization of political protests.

Networked media are, at one and the same time, instruments and stages with/on which forms of political participation can emerge and, as such, they are not without influence on the configuration of such participation. In conjunction with human actors, they constitute new political spaces, the special characteristics of which have been latterly associated with the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia (Anderson/Bharthapudi/Cao 2012, 152ff./Schachtner, 2012). Foucault denotes heterotopias as spaces which are drawn into existing societies in which the mechanisms of traditional cultures are represented and, at the same time, called into question, spaces which act as counter-placements or abutments (Foucault 1992, 39). For Foucault, concrete examples of heterotopias include brothels, libraries, fairs, psychiatric clinics, cemeteries, ships. These spaces are quite different from all other spaces which they reflect or which they refer to (ibid.). Foucault distinguishes between two types of heterotopias: (1) spaces for individuals whose behaviour is outside the norm and who are therefore in a state of crisis, and (2) spaces for individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the norm (Anderson et al. 2012, 157).

This paper relates to the second type of heterotopias, even though it is not possible to strictly divide the one from the other. Foucauldian heterotopias are part of the physical world while here it is very much a question of heterotopias in a mediatized society, covering both the physical world and the immaterial-material world of the internet. These heterotopias have fluid boundaries which do not exile new political forms to one or the other space and which are also linked to the society which surrounds them, which can potentially lead to their not being unaffected by political counter-visions (ibid., 162).

Anderson/Bharthapudi/Cao recommend considering heterotopias as transient ideas (ibid.). This thought cannot have been alien to Foucault as he considers ships to be the «heterotopia par excellence» (Foucault 1992, 46). The metaphor of a ship calls for political forms characterized by political actors finding themselves in constant dispute with established orders and their own moral values, sailing towards the shores of a new society in the process (Anderson et al. 2012, 164). According to Anderson/Bharthapudi/Cao, digital media reinforce the ship metaphor because they can involve network actors in a process of reflection thanks to their transnational and interactive character, which could contribute to initiating social change (ibid).

2. Characteristics of political heterotopias in the age of the internet

The following section introduces five characteristics of digitally supported heterotopias as spaces for political participation which not only emerged in the study on Communicative Publics in Cyberspace but which Manuel Castells also considers to be significant. Some of these characteristics are inconsistent with the traits of political movements to date; some of them are well-known features which have taken on a specific form under the influence of networked media. These characteristics do not only leave their mark on political action in digital networks but also on actions in the »outside« world, in geographical places like Tahrir Square[25] in Cairo or Zuccotti Park[26] in New York. In line with Castells, my interest lies in the activities of political movements taking place in both virtual and physical reality because, as clarified above, political participation in the internet age does not lend itself to being exiled to one or the other space.

At the same time, it is important to point out that the theoretical categories used to capture the characteristics of new forms of political participation have been developed in a western context. This entails a risk of being imprecise, maybe even a risk of making errors of judgement, and reminds us of the necessity of transnational dialogue between academics in order to verify or sharpen the categories used to explain these new kinds of hybrid phenomena.

2.1 Emotions and concern as a starting point

Concern was identified as the strongest motivation for political participation on the part of the Arab activists, both online and offline, who were investigated in Communicative Publics in Cyberspace.27 This emotion is expressed in a comic strip which we found on the platform Mideast Youth[28]: «We grew up with 12th century culture and see the foolishness of old barriers and grudges». Concern points to an entanglement of structures and institutions which influence their lives (Fraser 2007, 249). It is accompanied by strong feelings which Castells also sees as a frequent trigger for new forms of political participation (Castells 2012, 219). In line with

[25] Main location of the Egyptian revolution in January 2011.

[26] Gathering place of the Occupy Wall Street movement.

[27] As part of this study, discussions on the platform *Mideast Youth* were analysed, observations of other Arab networks like *bahairights* and *migrantrights* were carried out and interviews were held with network actors from Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the Yemen and the United Arab Emirates; our interview partners also produced drawings to illustrate their thoughts. This part of the project relates to the Middle East, Europe, the USA and Canada.

[28] *Mideast Youth* was founded in Bahrain in 2007 and sees itself as a digital meeting place for people from various countries and with different ethnic/cultural backgrounds. Right from the start, it aspired to initiate democratic processes (http://www.mideastyouth.com/about-us, accessed on 31.07.2007).

Castell, every social change includes individual and collective actions which are emotional at heart (ibid.). As he points out, anger and rage grow as injustices are detected and somebody is identified as being responsible. In our study Communicative Publics in Cyberspace, the Arab network actors expressed their anger and outrage in the face of the suppression of the freedom of speech and opinion by entrenched political powers. They also emphasized the sufferingcaused by such circumstances, as illustrated in the words of a Yemeni network actor «We're talking about many years of suffering, of people suffering in their own nation by their own regime»[29]. We also encountered fear, for example when electronic messages containing threats were sent by surveillance authorities. While anger, rage and frustration tend to provoke a reaction, fear and suffering tend to prevent action from being taken. Castells believes, however, that obstructive feelings can be overcome by communication (Castells 2012, 219). That is something referred to by the blogger from Yemen cited above when she called networked media «assisting tools» which encourage individuals to share their emotional experiences with each other.

Another emotional antithesis for anger and outrage is created by humour and jokes, triggers for political participation which we often found in Arab comics online. Such comics are used to help deconstruct the mechanisms of the discrimination or criminalization of certain ethni groups like the Kurds or Baha'is.One example of the deconstructing effect of comics is Sophis-tech-ated, published in the network Bahairights.org in 2009 (Fig. 1).

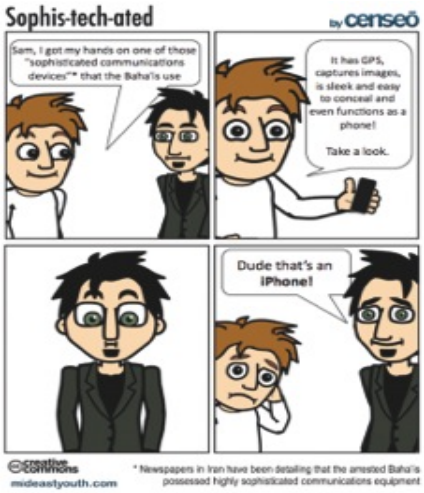

Fig.1. Sophis-tech-ated
Source: http://www.bahairights.org (accessed on 28.01.2013)

[29] All citations from network actors where no source is given were taken from the study *Communicative Publics in Cyberspace*.

The backdrop for this comic is the discrimination of the Baha'is in connection with two of their political leaders being arrested on charges of having suspicious communication technology with them (Schachtner/Duller 2013, 130f.). This made them appear dangerous. But the use of just one word – iPhone – exposes this suspicion as absurd. Those who believe that possession of what is, after all, a widespread form of everyday technology can be classified as dangerous expose themselves to ridicule. And those who are ridiculed have no power; existing power relations are reversed.

Comics allow their authors to express criticism in encoded form, thereby protecting themselves from repression. Their jokes turn a burden into something lightweight, which can reduce feelings of powerlessness.

As already mentioned, concern signalizes entanglement in situations which are experienced as being a burden or a threat. For Nancy Fraser, concern is a prerequisite for the normative legitimacy of political participation (Fraser 2007, 249).

2.2 Interconnected experiences as the mainstay of political participation

In contrast with established forms of political participation, as developed in political parties, the new forms of political participation are not connected by programmes but by experiences (Castells 2012, 144). Shared experiences, realizations, views and emotions contribute to integration; they create the sense of shared identity which we came across time and again in our interviews with Arab network actors. Common experiences are seen as part of their shared identity, as illustrated by the words of this female Arab network actor: «We have a lot of stories, a lot of issues, a lot of aspects, a lot of faces that we want the world to know about». These shared stories then form the basis for a joint political voice which should be acknowledged, the network actors believe: «We have a voice and we want it to be heard». Melanie Radue emphasizes the importance of interconnected experiences for the Bersih movement in Malaysia, which is trying to change electoral law in the country. Following the Bersih 2.0 rally in 2011, which took place on the streets but had mostly been organized with the help of the internet, and at which, as Radue reports, the police brutally attacked the demonstrators, the distribution of information using digital media played a very important role: «[…] the Internet was used to disseminate news and to share experiences. Videos, photos and statements of participants were immediately spread all over the world» (Radue 2012, 65).

Just because a common experiential basis has been created does not mean that differences will not continue to exist, a fact that is implicitly referred to in the citation in this paragraph which talks about the many faces of the political movement in the Arab world. In fact, difference as an

enriching factor of political discourse is emphasized surprisingly frequently by the Arab network actors interviewed in the study Communicative Publics in Cyberspace. Even as early as 2007, the mission statement published by the founders of the platform Mideast Youth includes the text «We are a diverse group of young students, bloggers, and activists who strive for coexistence through democracy and democracy through coexistence»[30]. What the Arab network actors are aspiring after comes very close to what Yvonne Spielmann calls «contact zones» in line with Mary Pratt (Pratt 1992), in which differences and contradictions are not smoothed out; instead processes which maintain differences coexist with processes which resolve differences (Spielmann 2010, 61ff.; Winter 2010, 107).

2.3 Togetherness

Togetherness, in Castells' mind, is a key characteristic for new forms of political participation based on networked experiences (Castells 2012, 225). It helps individuals overcome their fears and regain hope, thus creating, in Castells' words, «a source of empowerment» (ibid.). In contrast to established political associations and parties, togetherness does not arise from a political programme or guidelines issued by a strong leadership but in a process of understanding via criticism, by creating a common system of values, by developing shared visions which go beyond the status quo, as the following question found on the platform Mideast Youth tried to initiate: «What would you do if Saudi Arabia just has it's [sic] first female president?».

This question alone is provocation enough when asked on a platform used by network actors who mostly live in countries with a patriarchal tradition. The fact that they are prepared to grapple with this question is evidence of a participatory culture with the help of which the participants in the discussion are exploring new avenues in political discourse. Initiating discourse by posing a question does not only imply a search for common ground but also tolerance of differences. «Togetherness-in-difference» (Spielmann 2010, 65), to put it in Yvonne Spielmann's words, appears to be a typical characteristic of new forms of political participation. It requires a balancing act which can be conceived of as the result of a learning process which co-determines the speed of political movements. «We are slow because we go far», was, as Castells reports, the most popular slogan used by the Spanish Indignadas (Castells 2012, 114). The contours of a different society, Castells continues, will evolve in a process in which speeding up and slowing down alternate.

[30] http://www.mideastyouth.com, accessed on 31.07.2007.

2.4 Translocality

In the face of globalization and digitalization, new forms of political participation no longer stop at national borders. Even when the starting point is a local problem, like the planned urban development of Gezi Park in Istanbul, translocal criticism is often one result of the debate on such proposals relating to the unleashing of market forces or the authoritarian leadership style of those in power, for example. Smartphone videos ensure that local protests reach a global audience. It can also work the other way round. Global problems like the mechanisms of a capitalist economy are dealt with on a local level by the activists of the Occupy Wall Street movement in Zuccotti Park, for example, a protest which was, nevertheless, very much in the limelight for the world public thanks to digital media and the coverage provided by the mass media. According to Spielmann, translocality arises out of the fact that every bit of information is constantly «circulating in mobile, flexible combinations and not taking on a fixed position» (Spielmann 2010, 65). As Castells points out, it is typical of the new political movements in a networked society that they initiate a «permanent global discourse in the net» (Castells 2012, 223) whose sphere of influence extends far beyond the net. That is what makes it possible for the spark to ignite. Castells talks about the virality of political participation (ibid., 224). If people in different parts of the world realize that protests are going on elsewhere, this gives rise to hope that change can happen (ibid.).

Jenkins/Thorburn discuss the phenomenon of virality in connection with the protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle in 2000. Indymedia.org, which was specially set up at the time, served as a platform for political activists to disseminate their goals, reports and documents worldwide. Jenkins/Thorburn sum it up thus: «These independent media centres have become a central force in a worldwide campaign against what the activists perceive as the evils of globalization» (Jenkins et al. 2004, 4). A current example of a platform which banks on virality is Crowd Voice, on which reports, videos and pictures of political movements can be found from all over the world. The founder of this platform set up Mideast Youth just a few years before, already getting to know the potential of virality in the Arab world and appreciating the more extensive opportunities of Crowd Voice. The fact that the virality of political movements is recognized as a risk by non-democratic systems can also be read into their attempts to gain control over the communication channels of political movements: «There is a prophylactic measure against the infectious nature of freedom» (Kedzie 2014; Schmidt 2012, 7; Jenkins et al. 2004, 10).

2.5 No command centres

Political movements in our modern networked society do not need an official leadership or command centres in order to distribute information or initiate processes of communication and political action. According to Castells, the decentralized structure of digital networks optimizes the opportunities for participation, helping to create endless networks without pre-defined limits (Castells 2012, 221). As was somewhat hopefully assumed from the start, these networks represent «a world with no center, no gate keeper, no margins» (Jenkins et al. 2004, 11).

In order to substantiate this approach, the metaphor of the rhizome can be called on which was introduced to the philosophical discourse by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (Deleuze/Guattari 1977, 35). The term comes from botany and describes a horizontal, usually underground stem that sends out roots and shoots from its nodes.

For Deleuze/Guattari, a rhizome is a decentralized, non-hierarchical system without a General which can be entered or exited at any one of many interconnected points (ibid., 35). Deleuze/Guattari juxtapose the rhizome metaphor with that of a tree, which represents a hierarchical system in which «one element only receives information from a higher unit» (ibid., 27). In rhizomatic systems, in contrast, the connections are not fixed; communication runs from any neighbour to any other (ibid., 16) Rhizomes do not function in isolation; instead they form a rhizome with their surroundings, as Deleuze/Guattari point out, with the wind, an animal, human beings (cf. ibid., 19). They deterritorialize themselves, just as they cause deterritorialization in their counterparts (ibid.).

Qualities of this nature also play a role in raising hopes relating to the political potential of digital networks. Should these hopes be confirmed, new forms of political participation are to be expected thanks to the connections between political actors and digital networks, and these will contrast sharply with all previous forms of political participation to the extent that the latter are characterized by centralized structures and fixed connections. It is also to be expected that these forms of participation and of sharing criticism and opinions will continue to proliferate underground, even when they are sporadically invisible in the physical world, only to suddenly re-emerge, above ground, somewhere else on the planet.

Nonetheless Deleuze/Guattari do not rule out that there are knots of arborescence in rhizomes, which implies the existence of hierarchies (ibid., 33). According to Jan-Henrik Schmidt, the architects of these new spaces of communication, the providers and software developers, can be identified as knots of arborescence: «They write the software code, thus programming the options and restrictions available to and imposed on users when exchanging information and participating» (Schmidt 2012, 8) Even if they do not dictate

the activities, they do channel them (ibid). As already mentioned, these «inner knots of arborescence» correspond to «external knots of arborescence» in the form of attempts to control rhizomatic developments in the net and to inhibit them, if needs be.

3. The role of the internet as a space and instrument for political participation

When debating the significance of the internet for political participation, the question Is the internet democratic? is often implicitly or explicitly found to be at the heart of the discussion (ibid., 3; Radue 2012, 62; Jenkins et al. 2004, 12). So far this account of the characteristics of new forms of political participation has revealed that they are developing at the interface between the network actors and the medium. Digital networks are neither democratic per se nor do they trigger off democratic processes (Castells 2012, 227; Winter 2010, 20). Rather, the causes are to be found in situations when outrage and anger are shared about social injustice, like a lack of freedom of speech and opinion, authoritarian hegemonic structures and a decline in living conditions, when the participants feel connected and believe that alternatives are possible (Castells 2012, 229). At the same time, the virtual spaces which political activists employ are vitally important for initiating and promoting political participation. As one political activist from Bahrain explained in an interview, «We use new media in order to fight against oppression, oppression against ourselves, oppression against minorities». The Tunisian media studies expert, Larbi Chouikha, confirms the role of digital technology in her own country's revolution: «Communication technologies such as Internet and mobile phone greatly accelerated Ben Ali's flight and the fall of the regime» (Chouikha 2012, 151). Castells considers the digital communication networks which are used by political movements in the internet age to be «decisive tools for mobilizing, for organizing, for deliberating, for coordinating […]» (Castells 2012, 229) political participation. The study Communicative Publics in Cyberspace confirmed that digital networks constituted themselves as media abutments in the Foucauldian sense of heterotopia many years before the Arab revolution broke out in 2011.

As Castells sees it, digital networks serve as communication networks for the organization of political participation on the one hand and for the promotion of political awareness on the other. The latter points to new, digitally based public spheres which partially correspond to the Habermasian concept. Jürgen Habermas defines the public sphere as being «made up of private people gathered together as a public» (Habermas 1990, 86) who discuss matters of common concern and come to agreement on joint action (Fraser 2009, 148; Habermas 1990, 56). Connectedness in the medium

of communication, shared interests and political intentions also characterize the digitally based public spheres which the new forms of political participation depend on. There are also differences. Firstly Habermas believes public spheres to be constituted in rational discourse alone while the forms of political participation presented here draw on political public spheres in which emotions and concern have been identified as extremely powerful factors. Secondly Habermas takes a single public sphere as his starting point while the new forms of political participation imply a multitude of partial public spheres (Fraser 1996, 157). Finally the Habermasian concept of the public sphere does not include the power factor which can impede political participation, as discussed here in connection with «internal and external knots of arborescence».

What makes digital networks eminently suitable as places and instruments of political participation despite the expectable «knots of arborescence»? With regard to the characteristics of new forms of political participation presented here, the following specifics of digital networked media would appear to be essential:

- Digital networks are characterized by low-threshold access which makes it easier for individuals to present their own opinions, search for information and to process this with others (Schmidt 2012, 3; Jenkins et al 2004, 2).
- The network structure of the medium supports the generation of concern particularly due to the cross-links with images and videos. That is why Castells believes that YouTube and its images can play an important role in the mobilization of political protests (Castells 2012, 224). The images are so powerful because they were often taken by political activists who were personally involved in the events or they were transmitted by live video streaming, enabling viewers to participate directly in what is going on «on the ground«.
- Virality essentially relies on the transnational structure of networks which connect every point in the world with every other and which have no defined borders.
- The interactivity of digital communication media encourages the exchange of experiences, feelings and thoughts, resulting in the emergence of togetherness.
- The horizontal network structure of digital heterotopias is responsible for dispensing with the need for command centres and generals (Deleuze et al. 1977, 40) in favour of cooperation and solidarity (Castells 2012, 225).
- It is still possible for individuals to configure parts of the internet themselves, even if the possibilities are limited. This provides

> opportunities to bypass the taboos created by the mass media in connection with certain topics, which can completely transform media discourse as a whole (Anderson et al. 2012, 158).

The media heterotopias encouraged by the specific structures of digital networks open up spaces which can become locations for experimenting in a safe environment in order to develop a new set of values and strategies for action, if network actors are interested in these new opportunities (Winter 2010, 96). In our interviews, Arab network actors explained how they used digital space in this interpretation of the word in order to overstep the limits of what is allowed, at least in terms of what they could discuss: «We talk a lot of taboos, homosexuality, […], atheism, sex traffic, things that people don't talk about outside of Mideast Youth because they are scared».

As Castells sees it, in its capacity as a location for dissent, the net fosters a «culture of autonomy» (Castells 2012, 230.), a culture which he defines as an attempt to balance the needs of the individual with the needs of society (ibid.). This culture promotes individuation not individualism; the former relates to shared ideals such as environmental protection or the realization of human rights while the latter places individual well-being at the focus of attention (ibid.; Hipfl/Marschik et al. 2011, 20). Digital networks which are used by political actors to create a «culture of autonomy» take on the functions of a ship as expounded in the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia because they are able to bring about a cultural transformation (Anderson et al. 2012, 164).

4. Democratic competence in the internet age

As I pointed out at the beginning of this article, political participation is one of the requirements of future-oriented education according to Klafki. I would like to return to this issue now and identify the competences which enable individuals to participate in political matters. The characteristics of political movements in the internet age sketched out above imply that there are several essential components of fully fledged democratic competence, and I will outline them briefly to round off the chapter.

- Interconnected thought

In view of our fragmented lifeworlds and experiences of life in today's globalized society, Oskar Negt calls for training in the ability to identify connections between developments in different places and on different levels in order to understand the relations between the local and the global or between social and economic phenomena, and to be better oriented (Negt 1998, 27). Interconnected thought makes it possible to create links between experiences because the communalities have been identified, even if

those experiences are quite different, a typical characteristic of political movements in the internet age.

– Heterological and transversal thought

Introduced by Christoph Wulf, the concept of heterological thought describes the ability to perceive and think about things from the perspective of the Other (Wulf 2006, 45). Transversal thought, in contrast, which Nira Yuval-Davis considers to be an essential ability when looking forward, starts with the Self, envisaging that first the Self is given a voice, without claiming that one's own position is essentialist (Yuval-Davis 2011, 206f.). Both concepts of thought aim to create common ground as a pre-condition for togetherness. Both schools profit from mimesis as understood by Wulf/Weigand. Mimetic learning involves processes of increasing resemblance according to Wulf/Weigand, implying an ability to open up to the Other without actually becoming like the Other (Wulf/Weigand 2011, 85f.). These processes help to surmount divides between the subject and the object (ibid.). In translocal political movements, mimetic competence helps to relate to emotions and concern experienced by people from very different backgrounds and different origins.

– Political imagination

In order to bring about social change, new orientations are required, and these, in turn, necessitate political imagination. The Arab network actor's wondering out loud what it would be like if Saudi Arabia had a female president can be seen as a starting point for such flights of the imagination. On the one hand Wulf/Weigand see imagination as making the world manifest to us and, on the other hand, creating the world with the help of mental images (ibid., 91). In its audacity, if not in its absurdity, the question about a female president for Saudi Arabia reveals the status quo of a society and, at the same time, points towards a different future. Oskar Negt pleads for a reservoir for the imagination or, as he puts it, for «mental stockkeeping» (Negt 1998, 20) which does not only store the bare essentials but which we can draw on in the long term.

– Media competences

In face of the development of political movements described above and in combination with digital networks, media competence does not only include the technical skills to make use of them but also abilities to creatively cooperate with these networks to achieve political goals. This also requires the ability to recognize the limits and risks which come from internal and external gatekeepers so as to be able to circumvent them, if possible, and to expand one's own room for manoeuvre.

Conclusion:

The competences described above combine media/technical skills and cognitive skills with social, cultural and emotional components, the last one being a particularly important motivation for political participation, as has been emphasized. They underline aspects which imply a changed conceptualization of the subject. The subject of the future is no longer the subject of the enlightenment, which has been considered the dominant model so far and which is still popular as an educational goal and in the theories of developmental psychology today. The subject of the enlightenment attempts to restrain, control and dominate diversity (Welsch 1991, 359.), gaining autonomy and individuality through demarcation from others. Philosopher Wolfgang Welsch juxtaposes such a subject with another one which resembles the type that we found in digitally supported heterotopias. Political participation in the context of the networked society requires a subject which sees diversity as enrichment and which reckons with Otherness (ibid.), which does not interpret feelings as a sign of weakness but as potential insights, which does not consider autonomy as being independent of relationships but as developing in and through relationships.

Subjectification as a process of coming to terms with social reality (Hipfl et al. 2011, 20) is not an incidental factor in political participation but an essential component, if not the actual origin. Prompted by the principles of the Spanish Indignadas, Castells conveys the following: «Let us rebuild ourselves (..), from the inside out, not waiting for the world to change to find the joy of living in our daily practice» (Castells 2012, 143).

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