

# MUNI

## Old and New Media & Political participation

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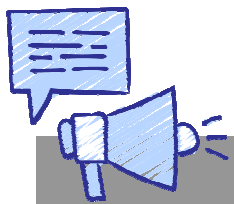


# Today's agenda

- Role of media in participation
- Old and new forms of participation
- Politization of everyday life
- Dark participation



# Road to participation



Independent  
media



Informed  
citizen



Political  
participation

# Road to Participation

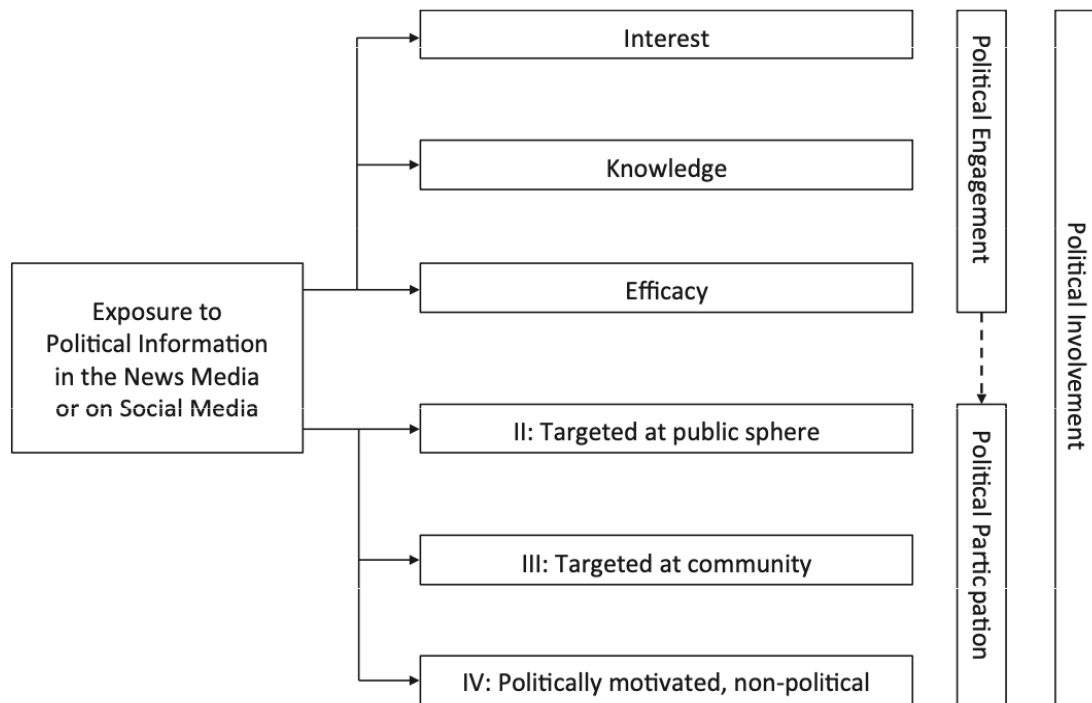


Figure 2.2 Effects of exposure to political information in the media

# Media and participation

## Traditional (old) media

- **Production:** Expensive information selection and content generation by professional journalists according to news values
- **Distribution:** Content selected by expert/professional gatekeepers – based on established news values – distributed to a paying fixed audience of subscribers
- **Media usage:** Location bound mass audience with limited selective exposure oriented towards passive consumption of information, based on professional selection.

## New media

- **Production:** Inexpensive information selection and content generation by (lay) users according to their individual preferences and attention maximizing
- **Distribution:** Users are like intermediaries, distributing popular content, sometimes like a chain letter, within networks of like-minded others
- **Media usage:** Interest-bound and like-minded peer networks with highly selective exposure oriented towards interaction through practices of updating

# New media and participation

- New media provides not only different way of consumption but also new ways of participation
- Environment where both are easily accessible

## Optimistic idea:

- Online environment and easily accessible information as a gateway to higher levels of political participation – spread beyond those who are already interested (Bimber et al., 2015)
- Environment where citizens can organize and challenge authoritarian regimes

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## Old and new forms of participation



# Political participation

- *'those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take'* (Verba & Nie, 1972)
- Reflects activities not attitudes
- Political participation has four minimal definitional features:
  - § (i) participation is an activity,
  - § (ii) it is voluntary and not ordered by a ruling class or obliged under some law,
  - § (iii) it refers to people in their role as non-professionals or amateurs,
  - § (iv) it concerns government, politics, or the state



**Voting**



**Cooperative activity**

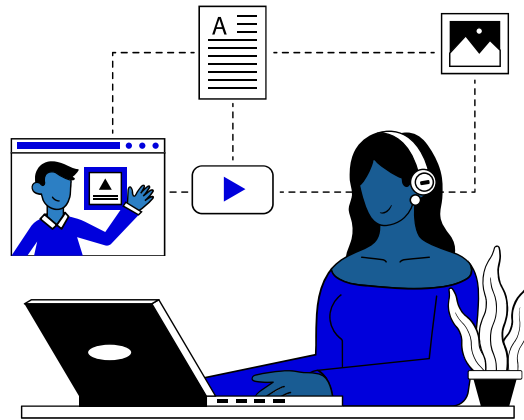


**Campaign activity**



**Citizen- initiated contact**





# What can change with internet?

Do you see any new possibilities?  
What are new types of participation people can  
use now?

# What does the internet change?



**More  
voices/perspective**



**Direct communication**



**Open place for discussion**



**Bottom-up engagement**

# What does the internet change?



## More voices/perspective

- Blog, vlogs or social media account as a space for voicing own opinions or providing further individual reporting on current events
- Also space for counter publics, composed of groups and interests that are not represented in the main-stream public discourses
- More opportunities for marginalized voices than through traditional communication channels

**BUT** these voices do not necessarily have to support the current political democratic structure, e.g. radical initiatives

# What does the internet change?



## Direct communication

- Citizens can more directly communicate with political actors
- Political actors have more actors monitoring their behaviour
- Communication also within communities – can lead to mobilization and organization

**BUT** Political actors can choose with whom and how they will communicate (they are not held responsible to respond and further act)

# What does the internet change?

## Open place for discussion

- Opportunities to discuss current topics with more people – gain different perspective
- Other people can become a source of information - provided the best argument wins
- Public environment between the state and the private
  
- **BUT** social media users can become closed off due to echo chambers and filter bubbles
- Online discussions are often incivil and intolerant places demotivating engagement

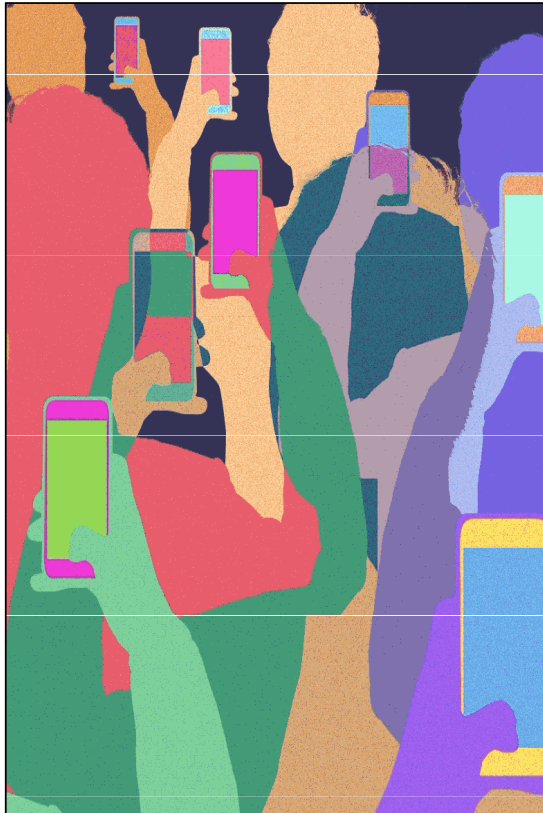
# What does the internet change?



## Bottom-up engagement

- Citizens can more easily mobilize in order to raise an issue – connection to other forms of (offline) participation
- Raising issues overlooked by traditional media/political actors
  
- **BUT** the mobilization can be anti-systematic, attacking democratic principles
- There are divides and inequalities in the digital environment

# How does participation online look like in reality?



- Expressing one's opinion online
- **BUT** growing number of social media leads to growing numbers of activities that can be considered political participation
- What can we still consider as political participation?

# Digitally networked participation

*= a networked media–based personalized action that is carried out by individual citizens with the intent to display their own mobilization and activate their social networks in order to raise awareness about, or exert social and political pressures for the solution of, a social or political problem.*

- Information in online environment is dependent on its dissemination
- User play a crucial role not only in creating but also connecting to, reacting and sharing content



# Strategies for online participation

## Expressive participation

- Main attribute is that is more visible
- Sharing, writing posts, posting images, creating events etc.
- By some users considered more effective than passive participation
- Takes more effort

## Passive participation

- Not as visible
- Reading posts, comments, events, etc.
- Often seen as less effective

Is like expressive or passive?

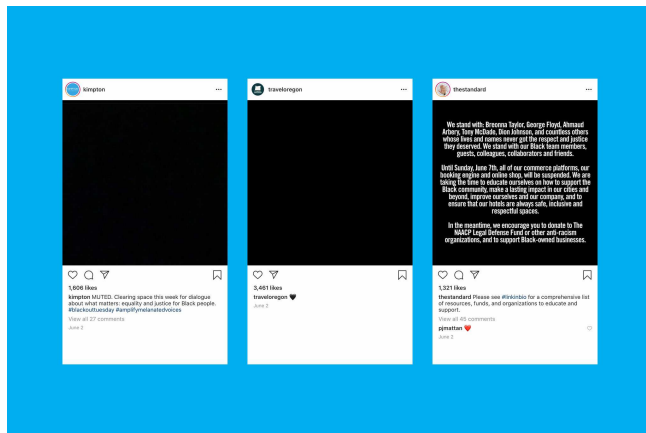
# Expressive participation

## Creating

- Participation that take the most effort
- often perceived as the “most valuable”
- Voicing opinions, providing information or preferences etc.

## Sharing

- Expressing opinions or narrative without creating the content



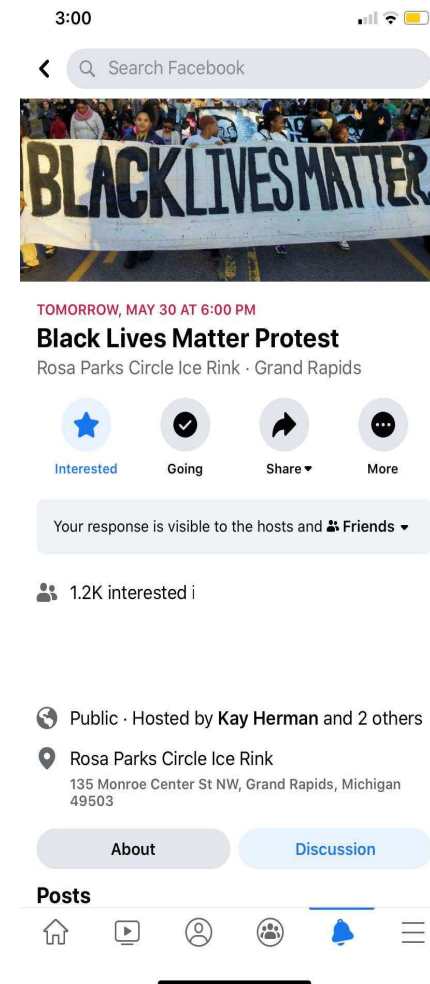
# Passive participation – does it do anything?

- Users often do not consider activities of passive participation as an act of political participation (f.e. reading posts, comment section)
- This type of participation can be perceived as less important because it is not visible to the public
- **BUT** passive participation can lead to expressive participation
- Influence on attitudes and opinions



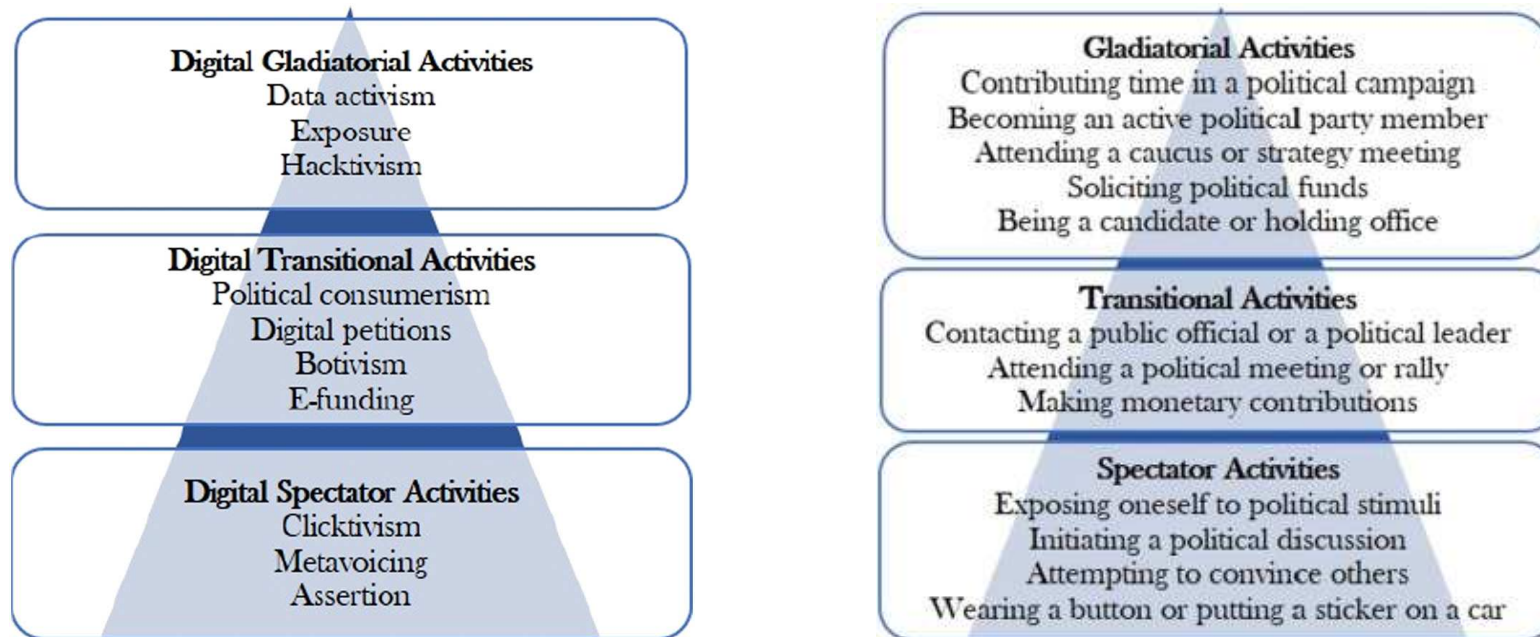
# Question of slacktivism/clicktivism

- (...) which refers to the trend of fulfilling only the desire for instant self-satisfaction and having little impact on actual political processes (Morozov, 2011).
- Criticism that there is a disconnect between online activities and the real impact in everyday life (Štětka & Mazák, 2015)
- Fear that opportunities in the online space may lead to less political activity offline (real participation in the demonstration)

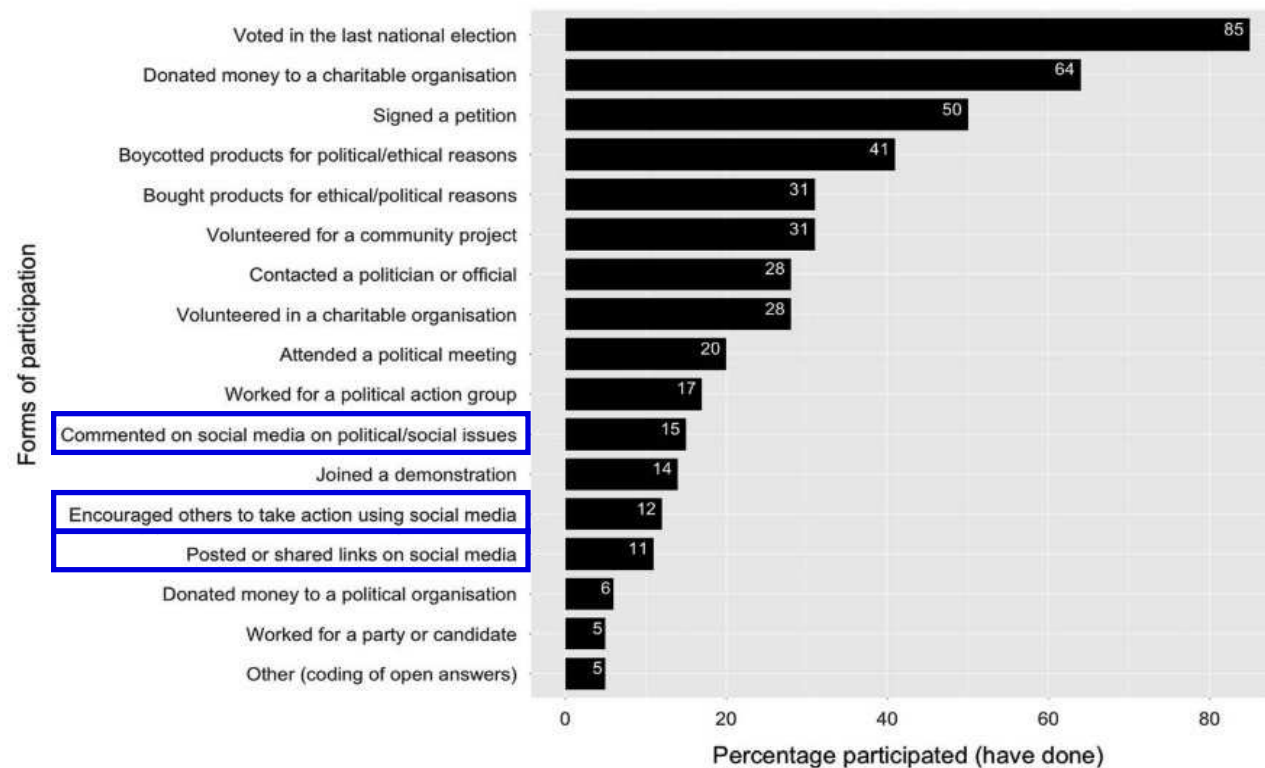


# Ranking different forms of participation

- Activities can be considered different levels based on required energy or impact and visibility (George and Leidner, 2019)



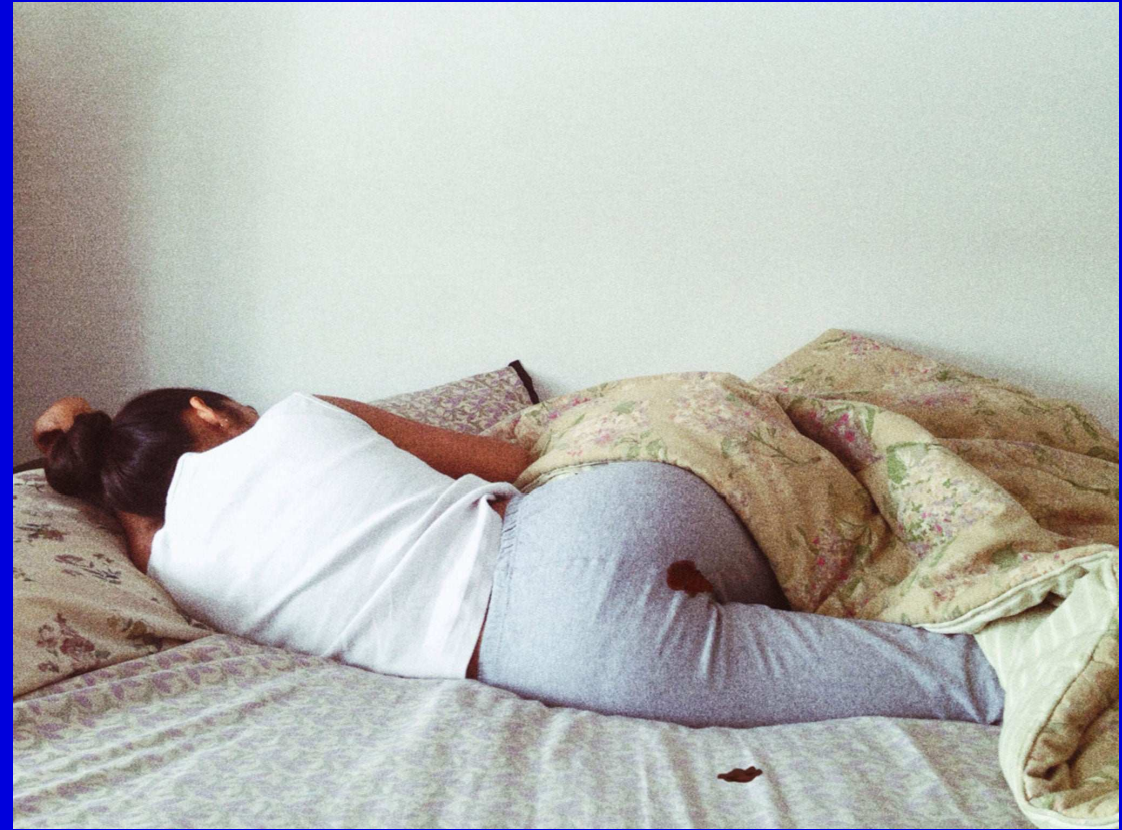
# So what forms of participation people do?





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# The Personal and the Political







# New forms of participation

§ Opening up the definition of participation: *'any dimensions of social activity that are either designed directly to influence government agencies and the policy process, or indirectly to impact civil society, or which attempt to alter systematic patterns of social behavior'* (Norris, 2002: 16)

§ Blurring the boundaries between political and civic participation

- Need to look for germs and projections of the political and public world in the private quarters and daily dealings of individual persons (Livingstone, 2005)

# The personal is the political

- Issues considered to be strictly personal in fact have their roots and projections in the political sphere - often used in feminist reflections
  - e.g. Carol Hanisch’s essay “The Personal is Political” (1970) spelled out the dilemma that plagued women’s discussions at that time regarding how to distinguish “therapy” from “political action.”
- **Question of one’s identity** in everyday life is on its own political, when we consider the inherent power struggle in society (Mouffe, 2005)



# The personal is the political

- Social media are primarily used for connection and communication with people
- Personal is a building block of how social media are being used
- **BUT** personal can often become political with/without the users intent
- In social media political and personal are often interconnected and impossible to separate



# Subactivism

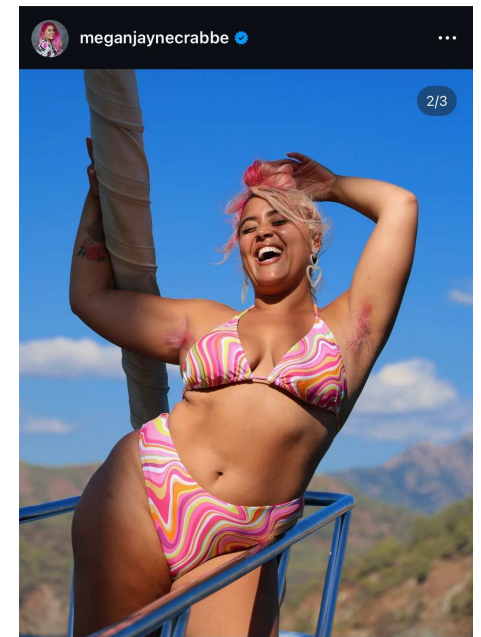
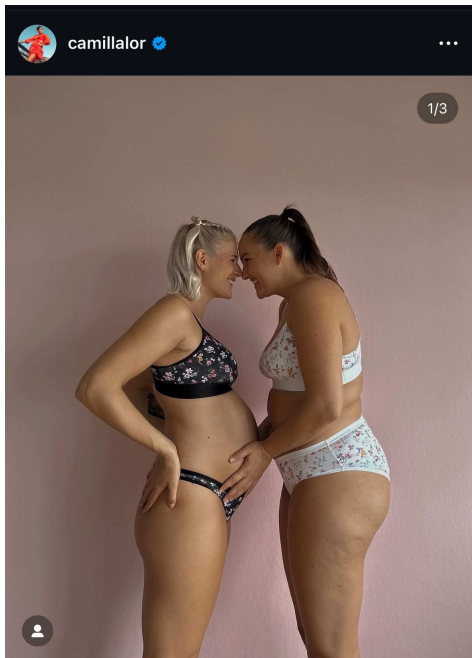
= „small-scale, often individual decisions and actions that have either a political or ethical frame of reference (or both) and remain submerged in everyday life” (Bakardjieva, 2009)

- Its locus is the private sphere or the small social world
- Rooted in the subject but necessarily involves **collective identities** often in an imagined form
- The decisions and actions that constitute it have **no permanent place in a person’s agenda**
- They **arise spontaneously**, often as new dimensions of work, homemaking, parenting, entertainment

# Subactivism

- In online environment activities such as reposting, using hashtags or flagging and reporting can be highly political
- Leads to **creation of communities that are not bound geographically** – bound by shared interests and beliefs
- Representation of one's own identity becomes political on social media especially if they are part of **marginalized community**

# Subactivism on social media





# Subactivism on social media



# Subactivism on on social media

- Influencers who are not labeled as political can become political
- **Acting as a source of information**, they can influence political attitudes either on purpose or involuntarily
- **Do not follow standard regulations and rules**, e.g. in political campaign
  
- Question of personal and political if you ourselves act as a source of information



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# Dark participation

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## What is dark participation?

- Quandt, 2018 : “(..) *characterized by negative, selfish or even deeply sinister contributions (..)*”
- Participation that does not help but threatens democracy
- Includes: trolling, cyberbullying, dissemination of mis/disinformation, uncontrolled news environment, incivility, hateful comments, etc.
- this type of participation seems to be growing parallel to the recent wave of populism in Western democracies

