

PRESS RELEASE

Detecting crises with the aid of social networks – international conference connects scientists in Leipzig

Leipzig, June 18, 2018

Communication mechanisms in social networks are at the centre of the international conference currently taking place at the Max Planck Institute for Mathematics in the Sciences. World-known experts on various disciplines, united under the Horizon 2020 project „ODYCCEUS Opinion Dynamics and Cultural Conflict in European Space“, are meeting in Leipzig to share their experiences and present their research achievements. Media representatives and journalists are welcome.

We currently live in a turbulent ever-changing world, influenced by cultural and military conflicts, different world views, by conflicting multilateral interests, and by rapid information flows in social and digital media. This information overflow poses significant challenges to the social sciences. Social scientists are expected to better foresee the emergence of a conflict, understand why different groups clash, estimate how cognitive dissonances can escalate into violence or political instability, and how members of a complex multicultural society can live together in a stable way. The ODYCCEUS project aims at a better understanding of the dynamics of public debates both scientifically and by the general public.

Social networks as Facebook and Twitter, different web-based discussion forums, and the numerous news channels provide an immense source of data. The project aims at extracting and analyzing this large amount of daily generated data to get a deeper insight into the underlying sociological phenomena. “ODYCCEUS offers a great opportunity to contribute to alignment and conflict resolution in a world with increasingly heterogeneous cultural bias and multilateral interests.” Eckehard Olbrich, project leader at the Max Planck Institute, summarises the project goal.

One of the main objectives of ODYCCEUS is the detection and observation of changes in political opinion, with the aim of gaining an empirical understanding of societal issues and processes. Today we observe new dimensions in political disputes and methods from automatic text analysis should help to investigate this phenomenon of the reconfiguration of political spaces. The scientists are working on the development of special tools for both

observation and visualisation of the main streams of political discussions on different levels. An important role is played by the mathematical modelling of the observed dynamics with the objective of developing empirically informed models for opinion dynamics in political spaces. The detection and understanding of the significance of cultural differences and diverging world-views should help to gain insights into the dynamic of socio-political developments and conflicts and provides a great opportunity for their non-violent resolution.

In order to master this challenge, an interdisciplinary cooperation of experts from very different research disciplines is required. The various project partners work in the fields of humanities, social sciences, political sciences, media studies, behavioral economy, geography, computer sciences, artificial intelligence, and mathematics. Theoretical models and methods, like techniques from game theory, provide the basis for understanding conflicts as a result of cultural differences. At the same time, they allow abstractions from single phenomena to the general, and a portfolio of case studies will serve as a testbed for the evaluation and validation of these models. Sophisticated methods of text-analysis and the development of appropriated algorithms ensure the identification of political statements and of fine-grained opinion-representations and expressions of cultural conflicts in the web. Geomedia methods study information flows that structure the international public space and lead to the identification of agenda settings in European space.

Within its different thematic sessions, the Leipzig ODYCCEUS Conference will focus on these interdisciplinary themes, as well as present first research results and foster communication between project partners.

The European Union's research programme Horizon 2020 is supporting ODYYCEUS for four years with an amount of 5.8 Million Euro.

Project partners are the University of Leipzig, Germany, Universita Ca' Foscari Venice, Italy, Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg, Sweden, the Parisian Universities Sorbonne and Paris-Diderot, France, Vrije University Brussels, Belgium and the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Picture:

Conference logo

<https://oc.mis.mpg.de/s/cLYNfxkUeHuxZiL>

Information about the programme of the 1st ODYCCEUS conference on Opinion Dynamics and Cultural Conflict in European Space

June 18 to 22, 2018

at the Max Planck Institute for Mathematics in the Sciences

www.mis.mpg.de/calendar/conferences/2018/odycceus

Information about the project

ODYCCEUS Opinion Dynamics and Cultural Conflict in European Space

www.odycceus.eu

Information about the Max Planck Institute for Mathematics in the Sciences

www.mis.mpg.de

Information about EU Research program Horizon 2020

www.ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020

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