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TRANSPARENCY AND SOCIETY – BETWEEN PROMISE AND PERIL

ABSTRACTS (YOUNG RESEARCHERS)
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THE GOVERNANCE OF TRANSPARENCY: RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES OF MODERN INSECURITY

How does transparency solve the problems it claims to solve? To date, scholars have often struggled to answer this question, leaving the organizational mechanisms of transparency in the dark. My work deciphers the function of transparency: it is a democratic strategy designed to tackle the feelings of insecurity that are characteristic of modern societies. To understand the objectives, practices, and traps of this strategy, I compare the rise of transparency at the beginning of modernity around 1800 with the rise of transparency since the structural crisis of modernity in the 1970s.

In the first step, I engage with Jeremy Bentham’s invention of political transparency. My first thesis is that transparency is an attempt to reduce insecurities by distrust. Translating distrust into practice, transparency, secondly, works as a guideline for developing concrete techniques that rationalize and formalize communication. These theses are now tested by scrutinizing the rise of transparency since the new public management employed it to cope with the challenges of the 1970s. Bentham and the new public management used a very similar rationale: by producing more and more information political behaviour can be controlled and rationalized, which in turn reduces insecurities. However, as I show, the techniques of formalization have unintended consequences that undermine their goals.

This immanent critique asks for a re-evaluation of transparency. In a final step, I compare the results of my case studies as well as the multi-disciplinary research literature, trying to outline a general theory of transparency. In sum, transparency provides a powerful institutional setting that regulates officials by canalizing their behaviour. However, my research does not only revise the claim that transparency fosters trust (as it translates distrust into techniques of formalization), it also shows that transparency does neither boost citizen participation nor security. I will therefore present an alternative approach to cope with modern insecurities: the republican idea of creative action.
Burcu Baykurt  
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THE CITY AS DATA MACHINE: LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN THE AGE OF BIG DATA

Over the last decade, tech companies have proposed to solve urban problems by augmenting cities with sensors, wireless communication, and software. This practice of merging privately held data with public spaces (popularly known as smart cities) raises critical questions about transparency, privacy, and inequality. Based on one city’s attempt at instituting algorithmic local governance in a historically divided urban environment, my research demonstrates how smart cities mitigate or worsen existing inequalities. I demonstrate that already-marginalized communities resist publicly available digital infrastructures, whereas middle-class, entrepreneurial residents perceive them as an opportunity to find secure economic futures. This contrast perpetuates the state of low-income neighbourhoods as “data deserts”—urban areas characterized by a lack of access to and representation in urban data. The response from public officials and tech companies to data deserts is to deploy more sensors and cameras, which stands in stark contrast to residents’ lack of trust in the promise, as well as the affordances of data-driven local services. This research argues that discussions about algorithmic accountability and digital surveillance, which focus on blanket values of transparency and privacy, should be more nuanced and varied in a way that acknowledges different communities’ right to self-determination over urban data.

Bernadette Boscoe  
UCLA, USA

WHEN IN ALGORITHMIC PROCESSES IS HUMAN INTERVENTION NECESSARY FOR TRANSPARENCY?

Today, machine learning is increasingly being used to make predictions from massive datasets in all sectors of our society. Machine learning (ML) is an application of artificial intelligence and is made up of algorithms that analyse data in iterative processes that humans use to make decisions. ML allows for non-explicit programming methods. Computers instead ‘learn’ from processing data from training data sets and applying the new algorithms to untrained datasets. Over the past decade, machine-learning algorithms have become more sophisticated, and humans are outsourcing tasks to allow computers to make more decisions based on information the computers have learned from the data. However, these predictive algorithms used to provide information to make societal decisions
are oftentimes black boxed and hence not transparent. Private companies may develop software with proprietary algorithms that are then used to make decisions concerning members of society, with the algorithms’ functions being little understood. As our society moves towards a compute-rich, data-driven environment where computers are used to make critical decisions that affect individuals, transparency in how humans create algorithms and how algorithms work is imperative for an ethical, just society. I ask the following research question: when and how in these iterative processes should humans intervene and check for transparency?

The lack of transparency in machine learning is an important sociotechnical problem that should be addressed by information scientists. In this paper, I demonstrate how machine learning works. I will show how algorithms lack transparency, and how biases can be embedded in, introduced into, and reinforced by the original data. I will introduce ideas to address the problem of black-boxed algorithms.

**Tobias Burgers**
Free University Berlin, Germany

**HOBBS REVISED AND UPDATED: THE SOCIAL CONTRACT IN THE DIGITAL ERA**

In the Leviathan, Hobbes outlined his social contract: Citizens give up their individual liberty in exchange for common security. To date, this social contract still stands. Yet this social contract is increasingly under pressure. This is the result of a new space. Cyberspace.

This project researches how societies’ desire for security, and the social contract of Hobbes, is influenced by cyberspace and digital technology. In this, it works on the understanding that societies want security — in the physical and digital world. Yet such is difficult in cyberspace. Cybersecurity is a complicated matter. The question of how to secure oneself in cyberspace is one many cannot adequately answer. As a result, citizens are increasingly asking their governments to provide security. As a result, cyberspace — for long a free, uncontrolled, ungoverned space — has slowly come under government control. What was once an area of limited statehood is now increasingly an area of statehood. Digital statehood, with states seeking to provide (digital) security. In this, the digital social contact functions akin to the original Hobbesian contract. Whereas the physical social contract can be monitored by its citizens — e.g. the degree of violence and ability of the Leviathan to provide security — this is much more difficult in the cyberworld. Cybersecurity and cyber defence are technical, complicated affairs, poorly understood by citizens. At the same time governments, from China to the US and the UK, among others, have often acted in secrecy,
avoiding transparency. The NSA and GCHQ, for example, are secretive organizations, operating in the shadows, far away from the public’s view. Yet they should implement the practical part of the digital social contract. They should protect citizens.

The research project researches how the Hobbesian social contract is functioning in cyberspace and in a digitalized society. It asks the following question: In an era of cyber technology, and the increasing importance of cyberspace, one that will only increase further, how is the social contract of Hobbes functioning, and how is it affecting the relationship between government and citizen? A comparative case study will be conducted, consisting of China, the US and the UK. In each of the studies, I analyse how the respective governments are securing (their) cyberspace. I will research how this effort was made, with which arguments, and how it influenced the social contract, and what the reaction of citizens has been as a result. The expectation is that currently, few and limited mechanisms are in place to control the Leviathan. Combined with little and lacking transparency on its side, there are significant risks that the modern-day Leviathan could develop authoritarian tendencies.

Loup Cellard
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THE PERFORMANCES OF DIGITAL INTERFACES IN THE THEATRES OF TRANSPARENCY

Transparency is not solely a pure ideal and horizon of the way liberal democracies conceive information politics (Ezrahi, 1990. Schudson, 2015). The concept is more insidiously a powerful device setting a particular theatre where information is contingently delivered. In a digital context, the privileged theatres where digital citizens inspect and navigate information are graphical user interfaces (GUIs) such as web browsers, public dashboards and accountability software. This talk will focus on graphical user interfaces (GUIs) and the way they order accountability practices and forms of transparency managements. It will addresses political aspects embedded in and sprouted by GUIs and respond to the following two pressing issues: How by distributing sensible capacities of seeing (Rancière, 1995. 2000. 2016), interfaces can potentially leads to the management of visibility (Flyverbom, 2016), attention (Citton, 2016), impression (Goffman, 1959) and capacities for action (Anderson & Kreiss, 2013)? What definition, ideal or vision of transparency is embedded in a digital interface?
Isioma M. Chiluwa  
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

DECEPTIVE TRANSPARENCY AND MASKED DISCOURSE IN ONLINE CROWD FUNDING: A MULTIMODAL CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF PONZI SCHEMES IN NIGERIA

As the demand for transparency in governance, public and private practices increases, the Internet becomes increasingly an avenue to foster transparency as well as deceptive practices. While studies have concentrated on the practices of transparency in the public sector and private institutions, very little attention has been paid to the perils of transparency in the digital sphere particularly in the proliferation of online scam practices such as Ponzi schemes as transparent financial institutions. A Ponzi scheme promises to alleviate the economic sufferings of the operators and the so-called investors.

Using a multimodal critical discourse analytic approach, this study investigates Ponzi schemes in Nigeria and their ideology of a transparent economic system. The schemes, which operate as crowd funding, also claim to operate a mutual benefit fund, which has been lacking in the Nigerian economy and has prevented individuals from investing in the banking sector. This study examines the objectives, ideologies and discursive practices of Ponzi schemes and how the Internet helps to promote the activities of these schemes.

This approach which differs from popular methods and frameworks in the study of transparency draws attention to masked discourses that are deceptive in webpages of Ponzi schemes, and why the “investors” fall prey to this scam. Within online Ponzi scheme platforms, deceptive transparencies are negotiated through asymmetric information and masked discourses. This study therefore attempts an interdisciplinary approach to studying some sociocultural issues challenging transparency and governance in Nigeria.

Elma Demir  
Goldsmiths, University of London, UK

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF JUDICIAL DATA: TRANSPARENCY, OPENNESS AND ACCESS TO RECORDS OF WAR CRIMES PROSECUTIONS

This study argues that lack of transparency and openness in the judiciary are obstacles to socially transformative justice processes. Although justice development programs have become an important element in the post-conflict social reconstruction across the world and enormous funds have been directed in the past decade, predominantly by developed countries, into the creation and operations of international and national courts for
prosecutions of war crimes dealing with consequences of armed conflicts, these have generated limited social transformations. Moreover, the political system in most cases remains under the control of organizations who have fuelled and lead the conflict; citizens have limited sense of justice with low trust in the justice sector as they are aware of political influence on the judiciary; and the rule of law does not increase in substance but only in formalism. As such, corruption and institutional inefficiency become legalized and part of the normative agenda. Thus, the lack of transparency hinders lustration and political accountability, but fosters corruption and organized crime.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is a perfect case study in this instance. The increased protection of private data and disregard for public interest in the same context in BiH have enabled judicial institutions to hide names and other identifying information on war criminals and their collaborators. Access to court and prosecutors’ records is complex, requires expertise, is time consuming and extremely costly. Such practices have hindered scrutiny of judicial operations and decision-making as they create obstacles for the general public and informed stakeholders to partake in justice processes. Individuals who suffered harm during the conflict, human rights organizations and associations of victims of war find it difficult to use existing records for initiating criminal or civic procedures. Consequently, the socio-legal analysis and expert scrutiny is limited as well.

By focusing the analysis on court and prosecutors’ office records of war crimes prosecutions, the study describes the social production of legal materials on the conflict in the former Yugoslavia in the early 90s, and how lack of transparency and access to these materials in Bosnia and Herzegovina hinders social transformation, transitional justice and peace-building in the country. Aside analysis of relevant regulation, interviews with key justice sector stakeholders and a survey, which included national and sub-national courts and prosecutors’ offices have been used as data resources through which issues of transparency, access and openness are investigated. Based on its findings, the study argues that social accountability – build upon the principles of equal access, transparency and openness - should be the necessary prerequisite of justice development programs if they are to generate socially transformative processes.
Luma Poletti Dutra  
University of University of Brasília, Brazil

TRANSPARENCY IN THE JUDICIARY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN BRAZIL AND MEXICO

This research aims to understand how the access to information law is applied by the federal supreme courts in Brazil and Mexico. To do that, we’ll analyse each country’s laws to identify how they deal with the Judiciary Power, and how was the regulation of the norm by the courts. Also, we’ll examine the communication and transparency mechanisms of these institutions — how they organize and if they dialogue. Mexico was the country chosen to be compared because its access to information law is considered by transparency researchers one of the world’s strongest laws. Besides, just like Brazil, Mexico shares the same international backgrounds that resulted in a wave of access to information laws approval in Latin America in the beginning of 2000’s. Both countries also guarantee in their constitutions the right to access public information, and the scope of their laws are similar. The background theory of this research is based on the concepts of public communication, access to information rights and transparency in democracy. We understand that the access to information law, besides being a transparency mechanism, is a public policy that allows the improvement of the communication between state and citizens. On the other hand, the state and its bureaucratic structure was never accessible for most of the society, and we wonder if the concepts of public communication and the access to information law are capable to change this scenario and apply some of the transparency principles.

Leana Esterhuyse  
University of South Africa

SHAREHOLDER FAMILIARITY AND COMPANIES’ VOLUNTARY DISCLOSURE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

Empirical evidence indicates that companies that reduce information asymmetry by increasing voluntary disclosures achieve several benefits, e.g. lower cost of capital, improved pricing, and liquidity of their shares. Despite the possibility of such benefits, many studies report varying degrees of voluntary disclosure behaviour. Recent studies indicate that investors’ investment horizon has a significant effect on actions taken by management. Companies with predominantly short-horizon investors spend less on research and development, invest in shorter-term projects that are less profitable than longer-term projects, and are more likely to manipulate earnings to meet short-term earnings
expectations. This study investigates whether investors’ investment horizon has an effect on companies’ voluntary disclosure information environment. Long-horizon investors should be familiar with their investee company’s risks and rewards, using both their own internal information gathering processes and the cumulative information disclosed by management over time. Moreover, over the course of a long-term relationship, they can become familiar with management’s capability to deliver long-term sustainable returns. Long-horizon investors should therefore be less concerned with short-term fluctuations of earnings and management’s public explanations and disclosures thereof. I hypothesize that higher (lower) proportions of long-horizon investors are associated with lower (higher) quality voluntary disclosure.

The shareholder familiarity hypothesis was tested in this study, using an ordinary least squares regression. Voluntary disclosures were observed via the channel of companies’ websites. A checklist was compiled of best practices for online investor relations, and content analyses were conducted on the websites of 205 companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. Shareholder familiarity was proxied by shareholder stability, measured as the inverse of average stock turnover over nine years. Therefore, the higher the stock turnover, the shorter the average investment horizon. The stability measure was lagged by one year to create a temporal difference between the shareholder profile and disclosure behaviour. I found that companies with an unstable investor profile (i.e. predominantly short-horizon investors) that are larger, younger, dual-listed and have a Big4 auditor have higher quality online investor relations practices. The hypothesis of a negative association between shareholder familiarity (by implication investment horizon) and voluntary disclosure quality is therefore accepted. This study extends the theory on information asymmetry and voluntary disclosure by providing evidence of voluntary information demand being bounded by investors’ investment horizon. It is important for the boards of directors and investor relations officers to establish the investment horizon profile of their shareholders before they embark on extensive transparency and disclosure programmes.
Marharyta Fabrykant
Belarusian State University, Belarus

(POST)POSTNATIONALISM AND DEMAND FOR TRANSNATIONAL TRANSPARENCY: CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Transparency has been predominantly studied from the supply side — prerequisites for and obstacles to transparent institutions and societies — with the demand for as much transparency as possible taken for granted. Meanwhile, transparency may appear as a source of threats as well as opportunities, especially in transnational context as the era of postnationalism is apparently giving way to a new rise of nationalism worldwide. The present research focuses on a relatively underexplored side of the current nationalist renaissance — the quest for self-imposed limitations of transparency. The goal of the study is to reveal the factors affecting a society’s wish to limit its access to the information from the outside world compared to demand for economic and political openness. To achieve this goal, I estimated a series of multilevel regression models using the data of the International Social Survey Program — National Identity collected in 2012-2014 in 33 countries. The results show that, unlike many attitudinal indicators, the demand for transnational transparency is not significantly related to a country’s economic affluence. Instead, it is strongly related to the level of national pride. In this regard, the demand for transnational transparency differs from other dimensions of a country’s openness. While popular support of economic and political openness is negatively related to the pride in the country in general yet positively, to national pride based on a country’s achievements in specific spheres, the demand for transnational transparency is negatively related to both these estimate of national pride. The results show the demand for transnational transparency to be the most fragile and the least nationalism-resilient kind of attitude towards openness negatively affected even by relatively benign components of national identity. With the rise of nationalism, therefore, the popular demand for restricting information flows from abroad precedes mass support for economic protectionism or withdrawal from political international cooperation. It is likely to create a “twilight zone” in which transnational political and economic institutions operate in a country where the population voluntarily rejects the necessary information about their actions’ rationale and is prone to misunderstanding. The relation between the new rise of nationalism and obstacles to international cooperation is therefore not necessarily direct, but rather mediated by a fall in demand for transnational transparency.
Ewa Grigar
Charles University, Czech Republic

PRIVACY AND TRANSPARENCY IN THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION FROM COMMUNIST TO POST-COMMUNIST CZECH SOCIETY

A SPECTER is haunting the Czech Republic: the specter of what in the West has been recognized as a dying privacy. This specter has not appeared out of thin air. It is natural and inevitable consequence of the present phase where knowledge, as Michael Foucault aptly asserted, gives power. (Referencing Vaclav Havel’s eponymous essay “The Power of the Powerless” written in 1978) In November of 1989, when bricks of the Berlin Wall were giving up under the multitude of hands of East German citizens while their Czechoslovak neighbors enacted a Velvet Revolution through massive protests, citizens of former communist countries hoped for a similar future: to live in a society that is transparent, democratic, and where privacy of individuals finds utmost respect. As the remnants of the Berlin Wall slowly erode and the memory of Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia progressively loses its details, these once fundamental longings of existential nature seem not to make it to the present day realms of post-communist societies. Moreover, one can also notice a transitional shift from the society marked by visible power and tangibly exercised control of communist regime to invisible power as well as omnipresent and borderless control of the capitalist system. Based on the case of the Czech Republic - as an example of a former communist country - my proposed research project aims to investigate the question of privacy and transparency in the light of transition between two opposite regimes. By using Comparative-Historical research method and Biographic Narrative Interpretative Method (BNIM) to be carried out in the Czech Republic, my goal is to determine if today Czech citizens are aware of living in the realms of society described by Gilles Deleuze as the society of control. There is almost non-existent public dialogue devoted to the issue with some attempts to rekindle it stemming mainly from cultural institutions, such as privately owned DOX Centre for Contemporary Art gallery in Prague which opened its doors to two international exhibitions the Brave New World (September 2015- January 2016) and Big Bang Data (April-August 2017) to increase public awareness. In this respect, with having already a small survey executed on the reception of these exhibitions by the visitors, I would like to discuss the important role that art and cultural institutions occupy in promoting such a dialogue with highly positive reception (as unveiled by my survey).
Maarten Hillebrandt
University of Bielefeld, Germany

TRANSPARENCY AS QUANTIFICATION

Organisations across the public sector seek to create transparency by producing a multiplicity of quantified data. Yet the definition of transparency that they rely on and its relation to their ongoing urge to quantify often remain underdeveloped. This paper sets out to analyse the conceptual relation between transparency and quantification in public sector organisations, by exploring the two concepts’ interactions as highlighted in the respective bodies of literature on transparency and quantification. The paper argues that quantification forms an inherently paradoxical embodiment of transparency, dislocating visibility and even creating new forms of opacity. It analyses three aspects of the paradox of ‘quantified transparency’: reframing, depoliticisation, and intervention. Quantification reframes transparency by replacing direct visibility by numerical technologies. ‘Seeing the organisation’ is thus translated into ‘knowing the numbers’. It depoliticises transparency by suggesting neutrality and claiming expertise — a discourse that is enhanced by the emergence of quantification experts. Quantification also creates an interventionist form of transparency. It invites observers and observed alike to align the organisation with the desired order as expressed by quantification instruments such as targets, benchmarks, or rankings. Taken together, the three-faced paradox of the reframed picture, the depoliticised vantage point, and the intervention trigger demonstrate how quantification cannot easily be reconciled with the policy objectives with which transparency is usually associated. Instead, it is best considered as a technology that is actively reductive and urgently transformative, and might therefore lead to consequences that may in fact contradict the objective of creating greater transparency.

Christopher Kirchberg
Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany

THE TRANSPARENCY OF THREATS. DYNAMICS OF THREAT PERCEPTIONS OF STATE AND SOCIETY BETWEEN “INNERER SICHERHEIT” (INTERNAL SECURITY) AND “RISIKO-GESELLSCHAFT” (RISK SOCIETY) IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

In my research project, I aim at investigating the ambiguous role of the implementation of EDP systems in the security apparatus since the 1960s. This development did not only shape the internal work of security services eminently, but had a huge impact on society as well. It led to extensive, but also ambivalent changes such as a transformation of threat
perceptions. In my PhD project I take the internal and public contestation of the implementation of a computer-based information system within the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz), the German domestic security agency, as an example to examine the internal and societal expectations and perceptions of this new technology and its ambivalences from the 1960s to the 1990s.

In my dissertation I argue that the computerization within security agencies can be seen as initial point of a twofold crisis of visibility. Coincidental with the Federal Office’s introduction of the EDP system “NADIS”, threats became increasingly invisible: At that time, the communist threat was changing its appearance from Moscow-driven agents and spies to domestic perils, like student protests and civil rights movements. These were located and operating in the heart of society, following a New Leftist ideology. To make society more visible, respectively transparent, the intelligence service introduced new computer technologies to facilitate the process of information gathering – and to trace the new domestic perils.

Based on these developments, my research interest aims at two different directions: On the one hand, I am interested in internal debates and expectations of the secret service regarding the introduction of the NADIS. Closely related to this is the question of how the EDP system has changed the internal methods and practices of the intelligence service in terms of categorizing and visualizing threats and enemies. Meanwhile, during societal processes of increasing democratization and liberalization since the 1960s, parts of society responded distrustfullly to the new possibilities of the opaque surveillance technology, since it allowed analyzing huge amounts of personal data of citizens. On the other hand, I am particularly interested in investigating how society responded to this development. While the state was trying to make “the society” visible to prevent danger and provide security in context of the cold war and against the background of altering threat perceptions of security authorities, “the society“ demanded for transparency of government action at the same time. It is significant to detect who was criticizing surveillance practices, how these claims for disclosure, directed against internal surveillance methods, were enunciated and finally, what changes they caused.

For the analysis of this mutual visibilization of society and the invisible threats of (EDP-based) surveillance technologies and practices the analytic category of transparency becomes the central heuristic tool of my research. It allows to focus on both, the level of secret service and that of society at the same time. for this purpose, transparentization is understood as process driven by reciprocal claims to make the opaque visible: While the state, in form of the domestic intelligence service, aims at making society transparent by using the new EDP technology, Citizens were increasingly claiming to make the surveillance
capacities of the Bundesamt and its computer systems transparent. The use of this concept allows to search for explanations for the changing threat perceptions in Germany. In a broader perspective, my PhD project contributes to explaining how the contestation of security and democracy was being renegotiated in western societies between the 1960s and 1900s; especially in the context of upcoming global exchange processes, which are still shaping our present situation.

Silvia Montaña-Niño
Queensland University of Technology, Australia

SHAPING SHAREABILITY: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL METRICS IN JOURNALISTIC PRACTICE AND ITS IMPACT ON NEWS VALUES

The technology start-up ecosystem in Thailand started to bloom around the year 2011. Before government support, early-stage start-ups in Thailand gained support from public companies. Five years later, in 2016, the Thai government introduced the Thailand 4.0 policy, which included support of the national start-up community. The aim of Thailand 4.0 was to develop the country into a high-income state, and the policy encouraged Thai entrepreneurs to focus on creating innovations. In a positive development, the government gave financial support to Thai tech entrepreneurs and academics. As the start-up scene in Thailand grew rapidly, the government proposed the single gateway policy granting the government full authority to blockade information from the Internet. Furthermore, in 2016, the government passed an amendment revising the Computer Crime Act which poorly defined computer crimes and the associated punishments, made laws stricter and, to some extent, violated freedom of expression. More than 360,000 people signed petitions opposing the Computer Crime Act 2016, but the government still passed the law, with only five members of Parliament deciding to abstain from voting (Thairath Online, 16 December 2016). To protest the government and question its transparency, netizens gathered through Facebook fan pages and created events where netizens taught each other to hack government websites, find confidential government files and post them on Facebook. In the Infinity Podcast project, the researcher became a podcaster and interviewed a number of stakeholders, such as Thai start-ups founders, to understand how start-ups cope with authoritarian rules in the digital era. The Infinity Podcast also interviewed Thai government representatives to understand how the government adapts to the digital era.
Benedikt Notheisen
Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Germany

THE BLOCKCHAIN, PLUMS AND LEMONS

Despite financial markets’ growing interest, researchers and practitioners still struggle to transfer the blockchain concept introduced by Bitcoin to other application scenarios. To shed light on the technology’s ability to function as a transparency device in markets with asymmetric information, this study utilizes an adverse selection model to analyze its applicability as an information sharing arrangement in credit markets.

In line with prior research, my findings indicate that sharing information about past entrepreneurial performance mitigates the impact of adverse selection effects on the banking side and reduces moral hazard of good entrepreneurs (plums) by generating a disciplinary effect. In addition, I identify an incentive for bad entrepreneurs (lemons) to behave opportunistically in order to be mistaken for plums when switching between banks. More specifically, the blockchain’s public record supplies them with information about the quality difference between plums and lemons, which allows them to optimize their mimicking. However, whether the additional information leads to an increase or decrease of moral hazard in total and under which circumstances the resulting behavior induces positive net utility gains and welfare effects depends on the characteristics of the market environment (e.g. quality differences, cost of capital, etc.).

Eventually, the contribution of this study is threefold: First, it proposes an information system design that allows us to utilize the blockchain as a transparency device in credit markets. Second, it connects the technical characteristics of blockchain technology with previous findings about information dissemination in lemon markets and embeds it in the literature on information sharing arrangements. Third, it extends the current research on information sharing arrangements by providing an analytic evaluation of the impact of the public availability – one of the blockchain’s core features – of imperfect quality information in a market environment with asymmetric information and explicit quality differences.

In total, this study aims to provide an initial guidance for the application of blockchain-based transparency devices, offers a first analytic assessment of the underlying economic mechanisms on the level of individual stakeholders, and indicates that greater transparency must not always be better.
Chanintorn Pensute
Chiang Mai University, Thailand

GOVERNMENT TECHNOLOGY AND THE THAILAND 4.0 POLICY

In 1933, Thailand became the first country in Southeast Asia to hold an election. Only four years later, in 1936, political candidates brought vote buying into the Thai political arena (Matthews, 2008). Vote buying in Thailand became a cause of the vicious cycles in Thai politics.

The network of vote canvassers adapted after the 1980s. In order to avoid being caught by the authorities, they began buying votes in disguise through the use of technology. For example, in the 2011 national election, instead of handing out cash directly to voters, vote canvassers transferred the money through online banking systems using a third party so that the names of known vote canvassers would not be shown (Whelan and Lidauer, 2012: 54). Gift cards also became one of the tools vote canvassers used to purchase votes (Whelan and Lidauer, 2012: 54).

In order to reduce vote-buying rates in Thailand, the Thai government enacted a law that enforced Thai banks to report to the authorities for every transaction over 60,000 USD. However, money laundering and vote buying spread massively during the subsequent national and provincial-level elections, indicating that the new law had failed to have the intended effect.

Youpin, a Thai social enterprise start-up, was created to enable local citizens to report problems to the authorities. Users of Youpin can report on any issue related to problems in society. After receiving a report from a user, Youpin shows the status of the report and how long has it been since the report was received. It is believed by many Thais and local government officials that Youpin can help reduce social problems and can have individuals working as civil servants promoted and demoted. In the near future, Youpin will also become a tool employed to reduce vote buying in Thailand.

This project will look at Youpin as a start-up that can help reduce societal problems in Thailand and increase the transparency of government. Furthermore, it will focus on transparency as a bottom-up rather than top-down process.
Veronica Polin
University of Verona, Italy

TAXATION FOR ITALIAN PEOPLE: IS THERE A STRONG NEED OF TRANSPARENCY?
EVIDENCE FROM FOCUS GROUPS

In modern societies taxation plays an important social function, the “fiscal” State uses the
taxes collected from citizens to guarantee social rights, equity and public services. Voluntary
tax compliance is a necessary condition for ensuring adequate funding for public
intervention and a fair relationship between taxpayers and the State is fundamental in
supporting the legitimacy of taxation.

In this paper taxation has been analysed by using a qualitative approach so far little
explored. We try to understand this phenomenon through the study of the different
dimensions (social, political, economic) that characterize the fiscal relationship between
State and citizens in the Italian context. Based on qualitative group interviews with Italian
taxpayers (six online focus groups, lasting three days, with overall 100 individuals with
different socio-demographic characteristics), I show the complexity of this phenomenon in
which emotive, symbolic, political and cognitive aspects coexist and integrate each other’s.
The voices emerged during the group discussions provide interesting insight into taxation
that can be reframed as a cultural and political field of struggle, embodying both
cooperation and contestation over the meaning of transparency, fairness, reciprocity, trust,
citizenship and the State. The analysis of the data collected show negative social
representations of taxation in the Italian context caused by the broken promise of the social
contract by an untrustworthy and predatory State. The Italian taxpayers seem to be
frustrated because the fiscal pressure remains high even in the face of the quick erosion of
social rights and the political system’s failure to deliver satisfactory public services and to
contrast the high, persistent and widespread tax evasion and corruption.

My results suggest that tax attitude and legitimacy of taxation, which are fundamental for
the survival of the welfare state, should be evaluated using an interdisciplinary and holistic
approach where transparency, trust and reciprocity between State/parties and citizens play
a crucial role.
Marcel Schmeer
Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany

TRANSPARENCY AS A LEGITIMATION AND ACTION STRATEGY WITHIN THE CONFLICT AREA BETWEEN SURVEILLANCE, PUBLICITY AND PRIVACY IN WEST GERMANY – THE “TRAUBE BUGGING” AFFAIR IN 1977

My presentation will briefly focus on the multifaceted interrelations between the secret, public and private sphere in the field of domestic security within the framework of a particular case study by focusing on the aspect of transparency as an analytical category. “Transparency” or “(self-)transparentization” is hereby conceptualized as a specifically applied legitimation and action strategy in the conflict-ridden debates about secret state surveillance practices, media information demands and the protection of privacy in West Germany.

In the mid-1970s, the nuclear manager Klaus Traube had come under heavy scrutiny from the German Intelligence Services because of his contact with individuals who were at that time identified as terrorists or terrorist “sympathizers”. Given his peculiar expertise and access to nuclear reactors, he was now regarded as a “unique” threat to domestic security. This justified not only the illegal monitoring of his private residence. Although the bugging turned up no evidence against him, Traube lost his job due to the accusations. This story was exposed to the West German public in February 1977 by the weekly news magazine “Der Spiegel” and in the wake of this disclosures the German domestic intelligence service (Verfassungsschutz) as well as the Ministry of the Interior had to cope with one of the biggest surveillance scandals in German history.

This case, in nuce, includes all the aspects of what German literary scholar Eva Horn has called the “epistemology of enmity”. She understands intelligence as a specific type of knowledge, a mode of perception that “introduces a logic of war and enmity into the civilian sphere.” This logic becomes manifest in a peculiar atmosphere of fear, distrust and suspicion that under certain historical circumstances might affect the work of intelligence agencies and thus turn against the own society. Against this background, Horn states, even citizens of one’s own country might come under fire by overzealous intelligence agencies, being identified as in some measure outside society. Thus, the Traube affair functions as a useful probe to analyze this process and a mode of knowledge production that might be described as “seeing like an intelligence service”.

Making use of yet unexplored source material, I want to show how different dynamics and entwined processes were linked in this case. First, I will focus on the practical and epistemological basics of governmental security production through the process of
“transparentization”. Furthermore, the implementation of intelligence knowledge in the political process and reciprocal amplifications of this (modes of) perception are of interest. Second, on the level of the public sphere “transparency” aims at the visualization of the governmental arcane sphere and for this reason also at broad news coverage about surveillance practices. This “counter observation” not only raised questions of the legitimacy and legality of the bugging scandal, but also of the secret gathering of information by journalists which was perceived as equally problematic. Third, the performance of Traube himself can be classified as a strategy of “self-transparentization” as he disclosed his alleged contacts to terrorists, his “conspirative” behavior patterns and his alternative lifestyle to achieve his public (and professional) rehabilitation.

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RIGHTS TO INFORMATION TOWARDS THE PARLIAMENT/
INFORMATIONSANSPRÜCHE GEGEN DAS PARLAMENT

My doctoral thesis is set at the interface of parliamentary and informational law. The work's focus lies on those cases in which the German Bundestag is the opponent of freedom of information rights, and on constitutional limits to these rights towards the Parliament. The project's approach is to bring up two further aspects of transparency. First, the state can also appear as a victim of transparency. Second, democracy might not be strengthened by it inevitably.

My work aims at finding out whether there can be found something equivalent to citizens' privacy on the state’s side in the parliamentary sphere - originating in an ensemble of the proper functioning of the Parliament, the free mandate of the representatives and the democratic principle as guaranteed by the Constitution.

Point of origin was the notice of a change of court rulings in this field, starting from a rather parliament-friendly position and moving towards one that is more public-friendly. This leaves the Parliament and its protagonists with only a narrow scope to repel informational requests. It was apparent that the Courts paid little attention to constitutional aspects, leading to the question as to whether there could be bounds to rights to information set by the Constitution, and whether these bounds – as far as they do exist – were sufficiently recognized by jurisdiction. The research was started in January 2016 and is planned to be finished in 2018.
As an introduction, the thesis gives an overview on the legislative activities in the field of freedom of information on federal and state levels. Subsequently, it describes how these rules have been executed since their enactment. This section is followed by a compendium of court judgements concerning rights to information against the Bundestag, stressing the Courts’ handling of constitutional aspects.

For the main part, the proper functioning of the Parliament is being identified as the primary limit to informational requests towards the Parliament. This derives from comparison to the informational relationships of the Government, whose proper functioning is protected against informational requests by what is called the Government’s “Core Area”. To specify the Parliament’s “Core Area”, the Parliament’s functions are described and their common features are pointed out. Following the abstract description of the “Core Area”, cases already judged and possible future cases involving informational requests of the Parliament are analyzed to determine if they are infractions of that parliamentary “Core Area”.

The talk given at the conference will concentrate on constitutional ground and structure of that “Core Area”, and on the consequences it has for informational requests towards the Parliament.

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EU STATEBUILDING DISCOURSE AND LOCAL PROTESTERS:  
SILENCING CRITICAL VOICES & HINDERING TRANSPARENCY IN KOSOVO

The European Union (EU) has played a crucial political, economic and social role in shaping the agenda of the Southeastern Europe, driven mainly by the principles of liberal democracy and capitalist free-market economy. Yet, the lack of focused research on the region’s Western statebuilding and local contention is a concern for those who care about the strength of democratic processes and consolidation of transparency in post-war societies. This study seeks to examine how the EU agencies explain and interpret the protest events occurring in contemporary Kosovo. To this end, discourse analysis provides a suitable research method because it looks at the processes involved in the reproduction, transformation and constitution of social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and beliefs. The data gathered and examined in this research includes the EU announcements, communications, the EU-Kosovo partnership documents, the Quint’s statements in the local media, in-depth interviews with senior EU officials currently residing in Prishtina, and several informal talks with key local actors.
Based on my analysis, my study shows that despite the EU being a liberal actor, aiming to advance peace and democracy in Kosovo, on the ground its statebuilding discourse tends to 1) silence and marginalize critical local voices and challenging actions and 2) delegitimize and discourage political participation that challenges the current national and foreign power orders. My argument seeks to present the complexity of the EU discourse, on one hand advocating democratic statebuilding, while on the other, preempting local struggles, hindering political transparency and undermining thus the power of the people in Kosovo. Hence, this paper’s contribution is twofold; on one hand it converses with the academic literature on the EU discursive power, while on the other, it exposes ideational ruptures calling for the attention of practitioners who aim to build democratic societies and increase active political participation in the Western Balkans.

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UNCOVERING THE GRASSROOTS: CORPORATELY SPONSORED ACTIVISM AND THE POLITICS OF OIL

Today corporate political action often takes place with and through citizens. In the most extreme examples, companies found and fund their own activist organizations, enlisting everyday people as the faces of advocacy campaigns. Critics use terms such as “front group” to frame such organizations as secretive counterfeits of real grassroots activism, and call for government-mandated transparency to make corporate politicking more visible. However, transparency may be a cause of front groups, not just a cure. Examining corporately-founded activist organizations in the U.S. and Canadian oil sectors, my research demonstrates that companies create front groups primarily to funnel citizens to governments’ websites, public hearings, and environmental assessments. It is the very forums governments have designed to make regulation more open, in other words, that incentivize front groups as a mode of corporate politics. My research also demonstrates that front groups are not particularly hidden. Most proudly announce their sponsors, and citizen members openly celebrate the financial support of companies. This research offers a challenge to scholarly notions of transparency that view revelation of political economic forces as an inherent check on corporate power; conversely, my work approaches transparency as a force that, in our own moment, motivates greater hybridity between citizen activism and company lobbying.
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THE FORGOTTEN HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CORPORATE TRANSPARENCY DISCOURSE

Corporate transparency has become a topical issue in the past decades in the contexts of corporate responsibility, corporate accountability and anti-corruption efforts. However, the discussions on these topics in both academia and policy circles are often ahistorical, and pay little or no attention to earlier discussions that took place in the 1970s and even before that. I argue that one key development that facilitated the emergence of the corporate transparency agenda was the oblivion of earlier analyses of corporate power within the United Nations and the academia. By the late 1970s, a broad consensus had been established on the need to issue binding codes of conduct for multinational enterprises that would have obliged them for greater country-level transparency e.g. on the taxes they pay in individual countries. However, the decline of this regulatory agenda enabled the emergence of a more corporate-friendly transparency agenda that focused more on the obligations imposed on states rather than on corporations. These examples demonstrate how ideas shape the world politics and how the oblivion of certain ideas can have concrete impacts on the power relations between its actors. The oblivion of the earlier debates paved the way for the triumph of more “business-friendly” discourses centred on the anti-corruption and corporate social responsibility arguments.
INFORMATION

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