Call for Papers: Sharpening Analytic Instruments of Narrative Contestation During Conflicts

November 7-8, 2024, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

Organizers: Professor Alexander Libman, Freie Universität Berlin; Professor Genia Kostka, Freie Universität Berlin; Dr. Tomoko Okada, Postdoctoral Researcher, WZB, Script; Dr. Ma Ming, Postdoctoral Researcher, Freie Universität Berlin

Theme

We are witnessing increasingly intense conflicts across various regions- from the Russo-Ukrainian War on the Eurasian continent to the ongoing disputes between Israel and Palestine in the Middle East, as well as the heightened tensions between China and the Philippines in the Western Pacific. Amid these conflicts, different parties have been crafting diverse and (commonly) contradictory narratives to shape global politics and public opinion. This "narrative warfare" has invisibly but intensely amplified the impact of these conflicts on the ground. For instance, the conflicts between Israel and Hamas have exacerbated polarization in the U.S., leading to significant protests at American universities. Therefore, it is imperative to investigate the construction, dissemination, and reception of narratives during conflicts.

Exploring the dynamics of narrative conflict is challenging. Although narratives are deliberately crafted and well-designed in policy documents, their projection becomes episodic due to the public's reliance on social media for information consumption, coupled with the common word limits for posts. Moreover, these narratives are often embellished with emojis, images, audios, and videos, all of which greatly enhance their persuasive potential. Furthermore, the advent of generative AI has led to a surge in narrative production, making it difficult to discern genuine public opinion.

Despite these challenges, the current era also presents significant opportunities that can transform the field of narrative studies. The computational turn in communication studies enhances the speed and objectiveness of data analysis. These tools enable more robust handling of diverse data forms, broadening the scope of research and enabling a more comprehensive response to research questions. The method diversity often leaves scholars pondering the best practices to adopt in their research endeavors. Additionally, the rapid development of advanced methods enlarges the resource and skill gap among researchers. In response to these developments, our workshop aims to address several critical areas to help bridge these gaps and refine research methodologies as well as sharpen the analytical framework of narrative clash.

We encourage participants to explore advanced approaches in the analysis of multimodal data, both as separate entities and in integrated formats, to identify the most effective and innovative techniques suited for the measurement of narrative contestation. Another significant area of focus is the enduring value of qualitative methods within the rapidly evolving domain of computational social science. Furthermore, in an era dominated by generative AI, it is vital to

discuss strategies for discerning and representing real public opinion amidst a plethora of AI-generated content, which often clouds the authenticity of public discourse. In addition to these focused topics, we welcome discussions on other pertinent questions that resonate with the theme

Topics may include (but are not restricted to) the following:

1. How can computational approaches be leveraged to analyze the construction and impact of narratives in policy documents versus their episodic portrayal on social media?
2. What are effective methodologies for distinguishing between genuine public sentiment and AI-generated narratives in the context of geopolitical conflicts?
3. In what ways can multimodal data analysis enhance our understanding of narrative contestation during international disputes, and what are the challenges associated with integrating such diverse data forms?
4. Considering the role of emojis, images, audios, and videos in narrative construction, how can researchers accurately measure their impact on public opinion and political discourse?
5. What are the implications of the digital divide and the skills gap among researchers on the global research landscape and potential coping strategies?
6. How can qualitative methods retain their significance and validity within the rapidly evolving field of computational social science, especially in studies of conflict and narrative?

Keynote Speaker:

[Yilang Peng, Assistant Professor, University of Georgia, USA](#)

Submission Details:

Researchers interested in participating are invited to submit a paper title with 250-300 word abstract that addresses one or more of the workshop's themes..

Abstract Submission Deadline: 26th August 2024

Acceptance Notification: 2th Sep 2024

Additional Information:

For further details regarding the workshop, please contact Tomoko Okada at tomoko.okada@wzb.eu and Ma Ming at ma.ming@fu-berlin.de

We look forward to your contributions and participation in an engaging and enlightening discussion on the future of computational narrative analysis. We will book accommodation for the participants for two nights (November 6-7).

Please submit your application **here (**https://forms.gle/XD1No7LYs59b99nq8**)**.