The micro-macro politics of audience action

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The political significance of audience practices takes on potentially new meanings in a changing media landscape. From our trend analysis we find -

- First, mediated daily life and civic engagement represents a broader transformation of mediated civic cultures.
- Second, these micro politics have an impact on macro-politics and collective action.

In the area of social life where the ordinary politics of media practices on micro levels connect – or disconnect – with manifest macro political actions, we propose that three key trends have emerged: a centrality of emotion in political participation, individualized collective action, and critical literacies.

Emotion in political participation

The centrality of emotion in political participation is a trend emerging from a body of literature taking interest in connections between everyday individual acts of media use, including emotional reception of media, and organized and non-organized collective political actions. When focusing on the impact of emotion in collective political action, emotion is often described within a social and cultural constructionist approach. In this regard, emotion is considered as an embodied societal product that can circulate, trigger or direct individual senses of civic-engagement. The relationship between individual articulations of emotions and reception of the emotions is key here. For instance, studies on tweets show that facts, opinion and affective sentences are blended and shape emotive stories at times of political uprisings.[49] While emotional articulations can contribute to mobilization, they can also strengthen feelings of belonging in a community, and influence feelings of exclusion and inclusion. In this regard, affect or emotion as the feeling of belonging to a social or a political community is a main point of connection or disconnection between micro and macro politics. This is especially important since younger generations might feel excluded and show little attention to partisan politics.[50]

Individualized collective action

Individualized collective action is a second trend. As Kavada states, digital media allows 'individualized forms of political action that subvert the notion of the collective as singular'.[51] The process of individualization is articulated in personalized action formations. Following this perspective, Bennett and Segerberg argue that 'people may still join actions in large numbers, but the identity reference is more derived through inclusive and diverse large-scale personal expression rather than through common group or ideological identification'.[52] In other words, digital media can bring individuals together **without a consistent collective identity**. This implies that digital media as a context for political action could significantly challenge key understandings of relationships between individuals and collectives taking political action.

Critical literacies

Critical literacies[53] is the third trend emphasizing new connections between micro and macro political engagements. Critical media literacy is associated with the use of media as tools for promoting critical thinking and democratic good.[54] The evolution of media and information possibilities points to the need of transforming notions of media literacy, making this 'less an issue about technical capacities, and more oriented toward critical, normative reflection'.[55] In this regard, it has been argued that digital media literacy can help youths to counterbalance low levels of political motivation.[56] Civic and media literacies are thus related in the need to foster connections between having critical and informed citizens that can be more engaged.[57] Knowledge, particularly a certain degree of literacy and valid civic knowledge, provides a starting point for participation in society. In this context, literacy is considered as a starting point, as cause and as an effect, in a 'virtuous circle'.[58]

Importantly, all of these trends tend to seek explanations of emerging forms of connection between micro-macro politics, rather than disconnection. The **feeling of belonging to or being excluded from a community** is considered crucial for understanding how personal and individual emotions contribute to connection or disconnection. Digital media landscapes can enhance micro-participation on individual but connective levels, without the conventional rules of collective action.