Andreas Jungherr. 2012. "Online campaigning in Germany: The CDU online campaign for the general election 2009 in Germany." *German Politics* 21(3): 317-340. doi: 10.1080/09644008.2012.716043

Preprint: Please cite published version!

Online campaigning in Germany:
The CDU online campaign for the general election 2009 in Germany

ABSTRACT

The German election year 2009 saw the first attempts by political parties to include web 2.0 services in their online campaigns. The 2009 election therefore, offers the opportunity to examine how political parties outside the USA—where online campaigning has become indispensible for candidates of both major parties—choose to use online tools in their campaigns. This paper examines the online campaign of the German Christian Democratic Union (CDU) with a special focus on the campaign's use of web 2.0 services. The different elements of the campaign will be discussed with regard to three basic functions of online campaigning provided by the relevant literature: 1) Presence in the online information space; 2) Support of the infrastructure of politics; 3) The staging of political support and participation.

KEY WORDS

political communication, online campaigning, German general election 2009

ONLINE CAMPAIGNING IN GERMANY

Since Barack Obama's successful bid for the US presidency in late 2008, every online campaign is compared to the well-publicized efforts of the Obama campaign. In 2007 and 2008 the USA was a uniquely promising backdrop for an impressive online campaign. There existed a highly politicized popular blogosphere;[1] the USA, where the most successful online tools were first developed, is also the country with the most advanced user base. The Obama campaign could hire a group of highly motivated and online-savvy campaigning experts who had already worked on an earlier presidential online campaign.[2] US campaigns are traditionally run with large numbers of volunteers. Thus, the campaigning culture lends itself to the adoption of online tools because of the logistical challenges provided by space, the number of volunteers and potential voters.[3] Finally, donations are an integral part of campaigning in the USA.[4] This political tradition also provided the basis for the impressive fund-raising successes of the Obama campaign.[5] The country was deeply divided, and the Obama campaign chose to run on a highly motivating narrative.[6] These factors all indicate that the online success of the Obama campaign has been highly path-dependent and is probably not easily duplicated in a different context.

Thus, instead of comparing international online campaigns with the Obama campaign and finding them falling short against this measure, we have to discuss each online campaign within each specific context.[7] A growing body of literature contributes to this task, be it in discussing online campaigns in specific countries,[8] or the country-specific use and dynamics of online political communication.[9] This paper aims to add to this literature by providing a detailed case study on the use of online tools by the German Christian Democrats (CDU) during the campaign for the German 2009 federal election.[10] When appropriate I will draw direct comparisons between the USA and Germany. Mainly these will address patterns of

online use in the USA and Germany. This is not to open a 'Americanization 2.0'[11] debate, instead these comparisons might help in understanding the specific context German parties acted in. The author was an active participant and consultant to the CDU online campaigns in Hessen, 2009 and to the general election in 2009. He held a similar position in the CDU online campaign for the state election in Nordrhein-Westfalen in 2010.

THREE POLITICAL FUNCTIONS OF ONLINE TOOLS

When examining the literature on online campaigns, three basic functions of online tools for political communicators emerge: 1) Presence in the online information space; 2) Support of the infrastructure of politics; 3) The staging of political support and participation.

Already in 2003 Bruce Bimber and Richard Davis identified the potential for political actors to be present in the information space of the Internet as one of the most basic functions of online campaigning. They especially emphasize the potential of a campaign to reach highly specific and motivated Internet users that visit political websites.[12] What was true for political websites also holds true for new political profiles in a web 2.0 environment.

Matthew Hindman used the term infrastructure of politics to collect the elements of online campaigning that contribute to the resources, mobilization possibilities, and recruitment of volunteers.[13] The fundraising possibilities through online tools might be one of the most discussed elements of online campaigning; however, in the CDU campaign of 2009 they did not play a mayor role. Stefan Hennewig (CDU head of internal management and during the 2009 campaign, responsible for the 'teAM Deutschland' and Web 2.0 activities) attributes only a small role to online fundraising, since the majority of CDU donators would still choose to donate through offline channels.[14]

The staging of political support and participation—for example, by follower counts on a candidate's online profiles—corresponds most clearly with the 'momentum effect' known

from conventional campaigns which expects that a candidate's progress or regress in polls translates in favorable or critical response by the media and the public.[15] In online campaigns, poll dynamics are supplemented by developments in the detailed counts of supporters on social networking sites or the amount of funds a candidate or party managed to raise through online channels.[16]

I will discuss the different tools the CDU campaign used during the summer and autumn of 2009 in form of a case study. This discussion will be guided by the three functions discussed above. The study is based on the publicly available campaign material on the various campaign websites and profiles. In addition to this, I also use quantitative data, if available, to illustrate certain elements of the campaign—for example, results of an internal CDU evaluation of its campaign platform or quantitative data on Twitter usage by various parties and politicians. Also, the discussion of the different campaign elements is based on conversations with key campaign personnel. For the most part, these conversations served as background information on motivations or usage practices and thus are directly cited in exceptional cases only. Finally, my own experiences as a participant of the 2009 online campaign inform the writing of this article and my assessments.

SUPERWAHLJAHR 2009: THE UNIQUE CONTEXT OF THE CDU ONLINE CAMPAIGN

2009 was a special year in the German election calendar for two reasons: There was an unusually high frequency of elections in Germany, which found expression in the term 'Superwahljahr' (super-election year). Six Bundesländer (states), Hessen, Saarland, Sachsen, Thüringen, Brandenburg and Schleswig-Holstein, elected their parliaments. In addition to these proceedings, elections were held for the office of the German Bundespräsident (President), the European Parliament and, in autumn of 2009, the Bundestag (federal

parliament). Yet, this high frequency of elections surprisingly did not lead to an intensive or polarized campaign. Reasons for this could be the awkward situation of CDU and SPD of having to campaign against a partner in an active, governing coalition and the challenges of an ongoing worldwide financial crisis. These issues lead to a national campaign of moderate intensity.[17]

Beyond these factors determined by the election calendar, many commentators saw Obama's campaign as the first that realized the participatory potential often associated with so called 'Web 2.0' tools[18] in the political realm.[19] The discussion of the role of the Internet in Obama's campaign has evolved and become more balanced since his election to office.[20] At least partially responsible for this moderation is David Plouffe's first-hand account of the campaign.[21] In his assessment of the campaigning uses of the Internet he seems to owe much more to Philipp Howard's managed citizen[22] than Joe Trippi's online revolution.[23] Which did not sit well with the narrative of many online enthusiasts who saw the Obama campaign as first truly participatory campaign.[24]

In late 2008 and early 2009 this moderation still had to reach Germany. Here the political scene was buzzing with online-hype.[25] Two elements of Obama's online campaign were very broadly discussed in Germany: the supporter platform 'My Barack Obama,'[26] now Organizing for America, and the campaign's use of the microblogging service Twitter through the account '@barackobama.'[27] Although the internet was a fixture in German political campaigns well before, the Obama campaign and its media aftershocks introduced social media or, Web 2.0 tools, on the local, regional and federal level of German campaigning.[28]

In 2009 roughly 68 per cent of the German population (ages 14 and older) used the Internet at least infrequently while nearly 65 per cent did so frequently. This compares to nearly 58 per cent (infrequent users) and 57 per cent (frequent users) in the year 2005, the

year of Germany's last general election.[29] This compares to 74 per cent of US Americans (ages 18 and older) who in 2009 used the Internet.[30] In 2009 the Internet adoption rates between Germany and the USA were quiet similar. However, there were considerable differences between Germans and US Americans with regard to political usage practices.

For instance, in the week before the election roughly 20 per cent of Germans used the Internet to search for political information. This number is similar to the percentage of Germans who used the Internet for political information in the preceding campaign of 2005.[31] Thus the number grew neither in proportion to the total number of Internet users, nor to the number of those who used the Internet to search of information in general. One possible reason for this could be the low intensity of the campaign mentioned above. This might have provided users with little motivation to actively search for political information, thus Germans showed, to paraphrase Faas and Partheymüller, no Internet usage without motivation.[32] These 20 per cent are well bellow the 44 per cent of US Americans who in 2008 used the Internet to find information on the campaigns of Obama and McCain.[33] The comparison of these percentages indicates a huge gap in the political use of the Internet between the populations of the two countries. A gap that cannot be explained merely through differences in Internet use in general.

Another interesting statistic documents the participatory activities online in both countries. When asked in 2009 how they felt about the new participatory possibilities of Web 2.0 technology, 18 per cent of Germans (ages 14 and older) answered they were at least mildly interested in posting content on the web. 13 per cent answered they were heavily interested in this possibility.[34] Obviously this interest concerns participation in many more than just political contexts, but the answers indicate a general interest in using the Internet for more than just information gathering, shopping or e-mail communication. Unfortunately, there are no data on actual political participation through online channels for 2009. However,

in May 2011 the Allensbach institute found that 29 per cent of Germans (ages 16 and older) said they had used online tools for political participation. This usage included: signing of online petitions or campaigns, participating in public online polls, discussing politics on social networking sites, writing an e-mail to a member of parliament, commenting on a news site, discussing politics in an online forum or chat room, becoming a member in a political group on a social networking site, posting political content on a personal website or blog, and using the microblogging service Twitter to comment on politics.[35] It is difficult to find a direct comparison to this number since the operationalization of political communication through online channels differs widely. A roughly comparable metric might be found in a 2009 Pew report. This report finds that in 2008, 19 per cent of US Americans (ages 18 and older) had posted political or social content using digital tools. These activities included posting comments about a political or social issue, getting political info on a social networking site, writing about political or social issues on a personal blog, participating in a group or cause on a social networking site, friending a candidate on a social networking site, posting political news on a social networking site, posting pictures online about a political or social issue, posting a video online about a political or social issue.[36] These numbers might serve as a rough indicator that differences between Germany and the USA in actual political participation through online tools seems to be much smaller than the gap that shows in the gathering of political information online.

While most studies of Internet use in Germany seem to agree on the numbers, the interpretation of these numbers varies widely. While some see the Internet and Web 2.0 as a revolution in the public's information usage, political communication and political culture,[37] others emphasize the comparably low number of active producers of content and come to the conclusion that, at least in 2009, Web 2.0 tools played a negligible role in the campaign.[38] This view seems to be grounded in a simple model of campaign effects based on counting

eyeballs. The medium with the highest eyeball count is seen as the most effective campaigning tool. This might be an appropriate assessment of the potential for direct campaign effects of political content posted online, but it ignores the cascade of indirect effects of political content on the web. An example from the 2009 campaign, the 'Yeaahh! flashmobs,' illustrates this potential quite clearly.

In the final days of the campaign, a small group of protesters, initially about 30, reacted to a suggestion[39] in the comment thread of a popular German blog[40] and appeared at a CDU campaign event in Hamburg. They carried handwritten signs with the words 'Und alle so: Yeaahh', which roughly translates as 'And everyone goes: Yeaahh'. They started shouting 'Yeah' after every sentence during Merkel's stump speech. A video of the group made it on YouTube[41] and shortly after appeared on Spiegel Online,[42] one of Germany's most popular online news sites. A few hours after the video was embedded in an article on Spiegel Online over 200,000 viewers had watched the clip. From that point on until the end of the campaign, groups of Yeaahh flashmobbers were a fixture at Angela Merkel's campaign stops. Five days after the first 'Yeah' was shouted in Hamburg the Tagesthemen, one of Germany's leading news programs, featured a segment on this 'entirely new form of political protest in Germany.'[43] Thus 30 people reacting to a comment on a blog that was read by a few thousand Internet users had become a story that a few million Germans watched on TV.[44] This snowball effect shows that dismissing the potential of political communication through the Internet and Web 2.0 tools based on eyeball counts drastically underestimates its true potential.

These factors constituted the background for the online campaigns of 2009. There were expectations towards the political parties by the media, the public, Internet users, as well as their own candidates for the 2009 general election campaign to have strong social-media components; the problem was that there were no use-cases on how to run a social media

campaign in Germany on the federal level. There clearly were lessons to be learned from the Obama campaign of 2008 in the USA, the campaign of Sarkozy of 2007 in France and the Dean campaign of 2003/4 in the USA. Still, these lessons were only partially applicable in the German context.

The high number of campaigns in 2009 on the German state level provided a laboratory of test cases on how to approach online campaigning in Germany. So the full election calendar helped the national campaigns to base their strategies on recent experiences with social media tools in German contexts. For the CDU the online campaigns in Hessen (webcamp09),[45] and in the Saarland (Peter Müller Team 09)[46] proved to be valuable prototypes for the online campaign for the federal election. An ongoing party-internal evaluation and learning process was also evident in the online campaign for the first state election after the general election of 2009. The lessons learned during the campaigns of 2009 found their expression in the design of 'NRW für Rüttgers,'[47] the online campaign for the election in Nordrhein-Westfalen in May of 2010.[48]

THE CDU ONLINE CAMPAIGN FOR THE 2009 FEDERAL ELECTION

For the campaign of 2009, the CDU established an organization called 'teAM Deutschland'[49] to coordinate the support of volunteers. At its inception, teAM Deutschland built on lessons from the 2005 federal election, during which a similar organization, the 'teAM Zukunft,'[50] served similar goals. Early on the decision was made to coordinate the main elements of the CDU's online campaign—especially the social media efforts—from within the structures of the newly formed teAM Deutschland. The idea behind this decision was to establish a more flexible reporting structure for the online campaign, to allow for faster reactions to unforeseen events, ensure flat decision structures and enable the seamless inclusion of campaign staff that had already worked on the preceding CDU online campaigns of 2009.[51]

The main purpose of teAM Deutschland was to enable volunteers to organize or support local CDU campaign events. The teAM was open to any volunteer, party member or not, who wanted to support the CDU or Angela Merkel in the campaign of 2009. The teAM was structured in local chapters corresponding to voting districts. These local teAMs were coordinated by local team leaders, who were in contact with the local CDU candidates. Thus each CDU candidate running for a seat in parliament had support by a local teAM. Beyond that, the local chapters were coordinated and supported by a small core team in the CDU headquarters in Berlin. (Since this paper focuses on the online aspects of the 2009 CDU campaign, the teAM Deutschland offline activities will not be discussed in greater detail.)

teAM DEUTSCHLAND

teAM DEUTSCHLAND: THE ONLINE COMMUNITY

The backbone of the CDU online campaign was the online community 'teAM Deutschland.'[52] The decision to built a specialized community platform was based in equal parts on the experiences of the 2005 campaign and teAM Zukunft, observations of the successful elements of Barack Obama's campaigning platform 'My Barack Obama,' and on the advice of key personnel of the Obama and McCain campaigns who the CDU consulted in the planning stages of the campaign.[53] When considering the digital political landscape at the time, it is important to note that the CDU was not the only party who developed a dedicated social networking platform for their campaign: The Social Democrats (SPD) and the Green party (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) developed similar platforms for their supporters, wahlkampf09 (campaign09), now called called 'meine SPD' (my SPD),[54] and 'Wurzelwerk' (rootwork) respectively.[55]

The CDU encouraged its party members and supporters without party affiliations to join the online community. By the end of the campaign the CDU could register 27,537

supporters. While this is clearly less than the number of supporters Barack Obama could mobilize, it was the highest number of supporters a German party could register during the campaign (as a reference point, the SPD campaign managed to register 19,071 supporters on their platform wahlkampf09).[56]

As far as the functions and capabitlities of the platform are concerned, users were able to create personal profiles comparable to those on commercial social networking sites. Users could then connect to other teAM members. Also, using the location information provided through their profiles, the teAM platform automatically informed users about their local teAM chapter and local campaign events. Users were also able to form groups around topics or candidates, start discussions with other users and even organize campaign events on their own. For their activities in the teAM community and on other social networking sites community members were awarded points. Internally users were ranked according to these points, similar to 'leader boards' in online gaming.[57] The highest-ranking members were awarded a special meeting with the chancellor and CDU leading candidate Angela Merkel during the campaign. The platform teAM Deutschland continued well after the election date of 27 September 2009 and was still used by its users to socialize around the CDU campaigns for elections in the states Nordrhein-Westfalen (2010), Rheinland-Pfalz (2011) and Baden-Württemberg (2011).

The Berlin core team used the teAM community to coordinate centralized activities[58] to support local campaign events, or to inform the teAM community members about campaign events or activities on other social networking sites. The strong reactions to some of these centralized activities illustrate the interest of teAM members and their willingness to interact through this channel. Two especially successful events were Frag Angie and Das größte Unterstützerplakat Deutschlands. During Frag Angie (ask Angela Merkel) supporters on the teAM community and on other social networking sites were offered the chance to ask

questions of Angela Merkel.[59] The chancellor answered a selection of these questions two

video interviews that were posted on the social networking site StudiVz[60] and YouTube.[61]

For the event Das größte Unterstützerplakat Deutschlands (German's biggest supporter-

poster) supporters were asked to upload their profile picture to the teAM community. These

pictures were in turn collected and printed on a large poster, which was on display in Berlin

during the last weeks of the campaign. Over 4.500 supporters participated in this event.[62]

Also the CDU campaign developed a mobile platform through which the community and

blog content could be accessed.[63]

Through the teAM community the CDU hoped to establish a communication channel to

its members and supporters that was more than just a mailing list. The aim was to inform

interested individuals about the campaign and to enable them to act and organize in support

of Angela Merkel and the CDU.[64] These aims clearly correspond with Hindman's

Infrastructure of Politics, discussed above.[65] It is difficult to measure the effect this might

have had on the campaign and the CDU performance on election day. An internal CDU

survey of local teAM leaders might offer some insight on how valuable the platform was to

local organizers of campaign events.[66]

When asked if the teAM Deutschland website was a valuable tool for the organization

of campaign activities nearly all local teAM leaders who answered the question agreed either

completely or mostly (see Table 1). When asked if they thought the teAM Deutschland could

also have been coordinated by using an already existing social networking platform most of

the local teAM leaders disagreed (see Table 2). Obviously one has to be carful not to

overstate these results as they are based on self-reported behavior and cannot speak on the

actual use of the teAM Deutschland platform in the organization of local campaign events.

Still, the answers of local teAM leaders show that, at least in the opinions of local campaign

organizers, the teAM Deutschland website and social networking platform was an important tool in the organization and coordination of local campaign events.

(Table 1 about here)

(Table 2 about here)

When asked why they had decided to register with the teAM Deutschland website, members answered overwhelmingly that they did so to receive information on the campaign (see Table 3), an aim most of these users were able to fulfill (see Table 4). In the evaluation of its users, the teAM Deutschland website did not only achieve its goal to facilitate the organization of campaign events by its members but was also successful in providing them with information on the campaign. This evaluation of the platform's effectiveness corresponds with one of the predictions by Bruce Bimber and Richard Davis about the future use of the Internet in elections: 'Citizens who are politically interested and active will utilize the Internet as a vehicle for satisfying their need for information and support.'[67]

(Table 3 about here)

(Table 4 about here)

teAM DEUTSCHLAND: THE BLOG

The teAM Deutschland website also provided a blog written by members of the core team .[68] In Germany the popularity of political blogs is much lower than in the US.[69] Still, blogs published by political parties or candidates hold strong potential for them to influence the political agenda,[70] be a part of viral content distribution phenomena,[71] or simply to improve

the visibility of their websites for search engines through regular postings of content containing relevant political keywords.

The blog was used to post varied content. For instance to distribute information on campaign events,[72] events independent of the campaign,[73] or to link to political content found on the net.[74] The team also accompanied and reported on campaign events,[75] covered political TV events (see for example the debate between Angela Merkel and Frank-Walter Steinmeier),[76] posted endorsements of Angela Merkel by German celebrities,[77] featured content covering classic campaign activities,[78] featured activities of local teAM chapters (regularly featured as Das teAM der Woche, teAM of the week),[79] provided interested supporters with supporter logos, which they could add to their social network avatars.[80] During the campaign the blog was also used as a 'rapid response tool' to react to postings on blogs that were critical of the CDU campaign and misrepresented events.[81]

The campaign adopted an open moderation strategy towards comments. Although comments were moderated on the blog, the only comments that were deleted were comments that were insulting or held extremist views. This open position was also adopted in dealing with comments in other social networks or on YouTube. This strategy contrasts with traditional campaigning approaches that put more emphasis on the attempt to control the message and censor potentially critical content. In the CDU 2009 campaign the open approach did not cause trouble for the campaign. On the contrary, instead of trying to control comments to avoid a 'loss of control,' it seems more beneficial to adapt the communication conventions of the tool in use and accept potentially critical comments to campaign content.

The teAM Deutschland blog succeeded in regularly providing campaign-related content and in adopting the communication conventions of the blogosphere. But content posted on the blog did neither influence the campaign agenda nor it spawn a viral distribution

phenomenon. So in comparison with some of the potentials of political blogs discussed in the literature, the teAM Deutschland blog achieved more modest results.

teAM DEUTSCHLAND: YOUTUBE

By 2009 roughly two thirds of the German public were using the video platform YouTube at least infrequently.[82] Although most of these users probably did not use YouTube to watch political videos, these numbers made YouTube an interesting communication tool for political parties and candidates.[83]

The CDU campaign predominantly used their YouTube channel, 'CDU TV,'[84] to post professionally produced videos about CDU campaign events,[85] interviews with politicians,[86] speeches of politicians,[87] local campaign teams,[88] behind-the-scenes videos that illustrated different aspects of the campaign,[89] the campaign song,[90] as well as short image videos.[91] Other videos posted there were produced by volunteers and were of a much rougher production quality. These videos had a stronger focus on the authenticity of the events they covered[92] or were directly addressed to supporters of the teAM Deutschland.[93] But in contrast to the campaigns in Hessen 2009 and Nordrhein-Westfalen in 2010, where the online campaigns 'webcamp09' and 'NRW für Rüttgers' focused on videos produced by volunteers,[94] the focus of the CDU's national campaign clearly was on videos produced by professionals.

The 'CDU TV' videos were aiming for a journalistic look and feel, thus attempting to join the ranks of the traditional media as content providers. This approach corresponds with the mediatization thesis of online campaigns, which expects political campaigns to mirror journalistic practices and formats in their online materials in hope of producing stories that will be picked up by the traditional media.[95] In the 2009 campaign this happened at least once when Angela Merkel, in an exclusive interview for 'CDU TV,' did talk about her plans for

the summer holidays,[96] this was taken up by the press agency AP and then made the rounds through various media outlets.[97]

Between July 1 and September 27 (the day of the election) the CDU campaign posted 112 videos. These videos achieved widely varying viewer counts. While some high-profile videos like Angela Merkel's message to attend the election[98] and the campaign song[99] attracted roughly 30,000 viewers (both videos were prominently linked, Angela Merkel's message as paid advertisement, on BILD.de, the online portal of one of Germany's most popular daily papers), most videos attracted between 1,000 and 4,000 viewers. In comparison, a video documenting a protest at a CDU campaign event in Hamburg posted by activists in the last weeks of the campaign attracted over 200,000 viewers within days of posting.[100] This shows that the videos posted by the CDU campaign, while reaching respectable viewer counts, did not exhaust the true potential audience for political online videos.

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

The CDU did not only build its own social networking platform but also chose to actively participate on existing social networking sites. Since these activities slightly varied between different social networking sites—due to different user demographics and usage practices— the campaigning activities on the three most prominent social networking sites will be discussed separately.[101]

In 2009 about 29 per cent of Germans (ages 14 and older) used a social networking site by keeping a personal profile. This percentage was even higher in the age groups of 14 to 19 and 20 to 29-year-olds; there 74 per cent and 61 per cent were keeping a personal profile on a social networking site.[102] This high adoption rate shows the importance of social networking sites for political campaigns.

VZNETWORKS

The VZ-Netwerke (VZnetworks)[103] consist of three social networking sites with different target demographics. StudiVZ[104] is a site addressed to students. MeinVZ[105] is a site addressed to adults who completed their formal education. SchülerVZ[106] is a site addressed to pupils. These social networking sites focus on recreational activities and not on business networking. In this they are comparable to Facebook. If one aggregates the users of all three sites at the time of the election of 2009, the VZnetworks were the social networking platform with the largest membership count in Germany. In mid 2009, the time of the campaign for the federal election, they had roughly 15 million users.[107]

As a special service for the 2009 campaign the VZnetworks enabled politicians and political parties to use special profiles, so called Edelprofile (special profiles). These profiles provided politicians and political parties with more options with regard to design, the integration of pictures, the embedding of videos, and the integration of RSS-feeds.[108] Adding to this the VZnetworks collected the activities of politicians and political parties in a group, which they called 'Wahlzentrale' (election hub).[109] There they informed group members about interesting profiles, campaign events, and campaign accompanying activities organized by the VZnetworks.[110] The biggest event organized by the VZnetworks in cooperation with the German television station ZDF was the TV-Show Erst Fragen dann Wählen (ask first vote later). The aim of the show was to open up the political discussion to young voters, a part of the electorate, that the organizers hoped to find on the VZnetworks. On their profiles users were encouraged to ask written or video recorded questions of the mayor parties' leading candidates. Each candidate then had the chance to answer these questions during the show.[111] All leading candidates, except Angela Merkel, decided to use that opportunity.[112]

The CDU campaign maintained two special profiles during the election campaign, one for the CDU's leading candidate, Angela Merkel,[113] and one for the party.[114] These profiles were used to provide interested users with information about campaign activities. A heavily used tool was the option to send messages to VZnetwork users who had connected with the profiles. These messages were used as a low-frequency mobilizing tool, be it for specific campaign events or as a get-out-the-vote mobilizing tool. The campaign also used the profiles to alert users of platform independent activities, be it the event 'Frag Angie' (Ask Angie) or the event 'Das größte Unterstützerplakat Deutschlands' (Germany's biggest support poster). Both events received strong positive feedback by the users of the VZnetworks. The campaign utilized the options for dialogue, which the platform provided; the campaign reacted to messages, comments or 'gruschelte'—the VZnetwork's version of a Facebook 'poke.'[115]

If one focuses only on the number of supporters the profiles on the VZnetworks became the CDU's most successful social media campaign element. On the eve of the election, Angela Merkel's profile showed 71,951 supporters. In comparison, on the same evening the profile of SPD challenger Frank-Walter Steinmeier showed 21,309 supporters.

An interesting side phenomenon is that the CDU's party profile did attract far fewer supporters as Angela Merkel's profile. On the eve of the election only 25.294 supporters had connected to the CDU profile. This difference also showed in the supporter counts on Facebook, as will be shown later. This could indicate that personalized profiles on social networking sites hold a larger potential to gain supporters than profiles of institutions. Alternatively this could indicate that Angela Merkel as a candidate held stronger sympathies among users of social networking sites than the CDU as a party.

XING

XING[116] is a German social networking site focusing on business professionals. In this XING is comparable to LinkedIn.[117] Unlike on the VZnetworks or on Facebook the terms of service prevent campaign staffers from building profiles for a politician, for a party or for a campaign. Although politicians themselves are allowed to use a profile on XING the campaign staff is not. This corresponds with the code of the site, which does not see the interactions of its users around politics as its mission but tries to facilitate business focused networking.[118] Still, like the VZnetworks, XING reacted to the campaign of 2009 by introducing special features. XING offered political parties the chance to start and moderate discussion groups. At first this offer was only extended to the established parties, CDU, SPD, FDP, Die Grünen and Die Linke, and was not directed at the new Piratenpartei (pirate party). After protests by the party's supporters, the pirate party also got the chance to moderate a group.[119]

The CDU campaign set up a group for the party on XING.[120] The group membership was considerably lower than the number of supporters on other social networking sites. The CDU group had 1,127 members at the eve before the election while the SPD group had 835 members. Thus these comparably low numbers were a phenomenon independent from political affiliation and dependent on the specific social networking platform and its usage culture.

The CDU campaign did not use its group to distribute campaign content. In contrast to the profiles on other social networking sites the discussion in the CDU group was mainly driven and moderated by the group members themselves. Only occasionally—in case of questions or objectionable content in conflict with the XING terms of service—did core teAM members intervene in the discussions.

FACEBOOK

Compared to the VZnetworks, which had started in late 2005, and XING, founded in 2003, Facebook was a new player among social networking sites in Germany. A German version of the site was to go public in 2010. During the campaigns of 2009 Facebook played only a marginal role because in Germany Facebook's user base was not as broad as that of the VZnetworks, which in 2009 still exhibited a clear first-mover advantage.[121] Also Facebook, in contrast to VZnetworks and XING, did not offer special features connected to the political campaigns of 2009.

The CDU campaign maintained three different Facebook pages: An Angela Merkel Fanpage,[122] a CDU Fanpage,[123] and a Fanpage for the volunteer organization teAM Deutschland.[124] On the eve of the election, 17,793 supporters had liked the Angela Merkel Fanpage on Facebook but only 1,930 supporters had connected with the CDU Fanpage while 1,843 supporters had liked the teAM Deutschland Fanpage. As already seen with the VZnetworks, more users connected with the personalized profile of a politician than with the profiles of a party or campaign. This preference for the profiles of candidates was not specific to the CDU, though. During the campaign Frank-Walter Steinmeier (leading candidate of the SPD) had connected with 6,820 supporters on his Facebook Fanpage[125] while the SPD Fanpage showed 3,586 supporters.[126] These data speak in favor of a higher potential that personalized political profiles on social networking sites might hold in comparison to profiles of organizations or institutions.

The supporter numbers also show why the CDU focused its efforts on the VZnetworks. The comparison of Merkel supporter counts on Facebook and the VZnetworks shows the importance, which the VZnetworks held in the 2009 campaign. As mentioned above, the Angela Merkel Fanpage on Facebook had 17,793 supporters while the Angela Merkel Edelprofil on the VZnetworks showed 71,951 supporters at the eve to the general election. Again, this difference was not restricted to the CDU or Angela Merkel. Frank-Walter

Steinmeier's 6,820 supporters on Facebook contrast his 21,309 supporters on the VZnetworks.

It is notworthy that this dynamic has changed in the months after the campaign. During that time Facebook approached the accumulated VZnetworks in user counts thereby increasing its appeal for political campaigners. Also, the high level of interactivity around content on fan- and profilepages, which is part of Facebook's usage culture, makes it an increasingly attractive tool for campaigners. An ever growing set of usage statistics that Facebook provides to fanpage administrators facilitates an ongoing evaluation of the Facebook element of an online campaign. A first sign of this change was seen in the strategy of the CDU online campaign in Nordrhein-Westfalen, the first German campaign after the campaign for the 2009 general election. This online campaign focused its social networking activity nearly exclusively on Facebook.[127] There also seems to be a shift in the approach that the Facebook management team takes to political campaigns. For the 2010 general election in the UK, for instance, Facebook implemented a considerable amount of campaign-specific content.[128] These changes exemplify the high dynamic in the field of social media tools and their use in political campaigns.

The CDU online campaign of 2009 used its Facebook fanpages quite conservatively. Regular status messages informed the followers about campaign events and campaign content was distributed through wall posts on the fanpages. As on the VZnetworks the campaign reacted to pokes and comments. Finally, the supporters on the fanpages were regularly addressed through messages about high-profile campaign events. The campaign also used Facebook for the aforementioned events 'Frag Angie' (Ask Angie) and 'Das größte Unterstützerplakat Deutschlands' (Germany's biggest support poster).

In their use of social networking sites, the CDU utilized the three functions of online campaigns with varying emphasis. The staging of political support and participation through

social networking sites seems to be the most heavily used function of social networking sites during the 2009 campaign. The supporter counts of Angela Merkel on the varying social networking sites were strongly communicated. Especially the constant rise in her supporter numbers in comparison to Frank-Walter Steinmeier's was a constant topic.[129] The attempt to illustrate momentum through the number of supporters on social networking sites was also used in campaigns following the federal election. Examples of this are the supporters of Joachim Gauck as Bundespräsident (2010),[130] the protesters against an infrastructure project 'Stuttgart 21' (2010)[131] and the supporters of Germany's then minister of defense Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg (2011).[132] The publicly visible supporter counts of social networking sites seem to offer themselves intuitively for the staging of political support and participation.

TWITTER

If one follows the definition of a social networking site by danah boyd and Nicole Ellison as 'web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system',[133] then the microblogging service Twitter could have also been discussed in the previous section. However as this section will show, the campaign used Twitter quite differently from the social networking sites VZnetworks, Facebook, and XING.

In early 2009 Twitter had become increasingly popular among CDU supporters and politicians. Partly responsible for this probably was the increased media attention Twitter received in the aftermath of the Obama campaign. Another reason was the active use of Twitter by the online campaign webcamp09 in Hessen. This campaign used its account @webcamp09[134] successfully for the purposes of information dissemination and community building.

The German Twitter hype suffered a momentary damper when two members of the German parliament twittered the results of the election of the German Bundespräsident from the floor of the House before these results were officially announced.[135] This incident led the German media to heavily lash out against Twitter as a political-communication tool. In the aftermath campaigners proceeded more cautiously with regard to the publication of personal Twitter-Feeds by high-ranking politicians. Still, shortly before the election Twitter was widely adopted by politicians and supporters alike.[136]

The CDU campaign used two Twitter accounts. One account had been established by the party before the campaign and was called '@cdu_news.'[137] This account was mainly used to inform followers about official campaign or party events,[138] to accompany party events,[139] or allow a backstage view of campaign events.[140] The second account was called '@teAMDeutschland'[141] and had been specifically to accompany the campaign. Its content was more varied than the content on @cdu_news. It also included information about campaign events[142] but in addition to this the account used @messages to followers[143] and critics[144] and linked to potentially interesting content on the web.[145] The campaign also twittered live from high-profile events on this account to allow interested supporters to follow the event via Twitter.[146] By the end of the campaign the @cdu_news account had 2,313 followers while the @teAMDeutschland had 1,300 followers.[147] The use of their Twitter accounts corresponds with the campaign function presence in the online information space.

One of the challenges CDU campaigners faced in early 2009 was that vocal CDU supporters were few and far between. To encourage supporters to voice their opinions online, CDU campaigners used Twitter as a community-building tool. Starting with the official campaign account for the state election in Hessen in early 2009, @webcamp09, campaigners used the campaign accounts to publicly communicate with supporters and thus helped them

to interconnect. Based on the experiences in Hessen, the campaign for the federal election used their campaign account @teamdeutschland similarly.[148]

(Table 5 about here)

Table 5 shows simple metrics that illustrate the different handling of the official CDU Twitter account @cdu_news and the account of the campaign team @teamdeutschland. The table documents usage statistics for seven twitter accounts affiliated with three political parties in Germany. The accounts connected to the CDU are @cdu_news, @teamdeutschland and the personal account of the CDU member of parliament Kristina Schröder, who in 2009 was still twittering under her maiden name Kristina Köhler, @kristinakohler. The accounts connected to the SPD are @spdde, the official SPD Twitter account, and the account of the SPD Member of Parliament Björn Böhning. In comparison to these established political actors I also added the usage stats of two accounts (@piratenpartei and @tauss) connected to Germany's Piratenpartei (Pirate Party), which only achieved some two per cent of the vote, but dominated the political German online sphere during the campaign.[149] One possibility to assess whether Twitterers use their account to interact with other users is the ratio of '@messages' (open messages directed at a specific user) and 'retweets' (popular Twitter convention, if one user reposts the message of another user by preceding it with the abbreviation 'RT' for retweet) to the total number of 'tweets.'

The table shows that there is a clear difference in the interaction of accounts of individuals and accounts of organizations. The accounts @cdu_news, @teamdeutschland and @spdde have much lower @message and retweet ratios than the accounts of Kristina Schröder, Björn Böhning und Jörg Tauss. The only exception here is the account of the Pirate Party, which comes close to personal accounts in @message ratio and clearly surpasses most

personal accounts in its retweet ration. This simple metric also illustrates that the @teamdeutschland account was used more actively to interact with other users than the @cdu_news account. But it also shows that the campaign interacted in a much lower frequency with other Twitter users than politicians did on their personal accounts.

THE 2009 CDU ONLINE CAMPAIGN

This paper documented the details of the CDU online campaign for the German general election 2009. Which tools were used, how, and why? This was undertaken to provide a descriptive case study to add to the growing literature on international online campaigns. The article has shown that three basic functions found in the literature on online campaigns can be used to understand the CDU's use of online tools. These functions are: 1) Presence in the online information space; 2) Support of the infrastructure of politics; 3) The staging of political support and participation. Especially the last of these functions, the staging of political support and participation has proved to be popular in German campaigns well beyond the campaign of 2009.

Another element of the 2009 campaigns was the ability for the CDU to establish an ongoing learning process into the use of, up until then, untested web 2.0 services. This learning cycle stared in early 2009 in Hessen through the webcamp09. A few months later the lessons learned during this campaign influenced the online campaign in the Saarland. Which in turn influenced the online campaign for the general election. On which the first political campaign of 2010 in Nordrhein-Westfalen based its online approach. This process creates prototypes from isolated online campaigns and ensures an ongoing learning process. This is important since, as has been shown, the field is highly dynamic thus ongoing learning and observation processes become important elements of any online effort.

In retrospect, the great transformative campaign expected by the traditional media and hailed by social media experts did not occur in 2009. Instead, political actors in Germany integrated social media services in their online strategy and started an ongoing learning process. Thus the German campaign of 2009 might serve as a case study contributing to the documentation of ongoing international social media adoption processes by political actors.

TABLES

Table 1: Question for local teAM leaders: The teAM Deutschland website is a valuable tool for the organization of the campaign

	Total	Percentage
Completely agree	69	59
Mostly agree	35	29.9
Somewhat agree	10	8.5
Mostly disagree	3	2.6

Table 2: Question for local teAM leaders: teAM Deutschland could also have been organized by using one of the already existing social networking sites

	Total	Percentage
Completely agree	7	6.1
Mostly agree	12	10.4
Somewhat agree	27	23.5
Mostly disagree	48	41.7
Completely disagree	21	18.3

Table 3: Question for teAM members: I used the teAM Deutschland to receive

information on the campaign

	Total	Percentage
Very important	1970	46.8
Important	1514	35.9
Somewhat important	437	10.4
Unimportant	192	4.6
Completely unimportant	100	2.4

Table 4: Question for teAM members: By using the teAM Deutschland website I received information on the campaign

	Total	Percentage
Completely true	1526	42.2
True	1447	40
Somewhat true	459	12.7
Not true	133	3.7
Completely untrue	55	1.5

Table 5: Twitter Stats (data for the time between 1 July and 27 September 2009 as provided by the Twitter API)

Account Name	Friends/ Followers (27 September 2009)	Tweets	@Messages Sent	Per Cent of @Messages Sent to Total Messages	Retweets Posted	Per Cent of Retweets Posted to Total Messages
@cdu_news	756/2313	173	1	0.6	0	0
@teamdeutschland	182/1300	341	41	12	17	5
@kristinakoehler	106/1051	375	112	29.9	27	7.2
@spdde	1701/3233	432	40	9.3	14	3.2
@boehningb	194/2111	407	92	22.6	41	10.1
@piratenpartei	5886/6286	1489	291	19.5	322	21.6
@tauss	195/5849	629	290	46.1	233	37

NOTES

[1] Y. Benkler and A. Shaw, 'A tale of two blogospheres: discursive practices on the Left and Right', *Berkman Center Research Publication* 6 (2010), available from http://ssrn.com/abstract=1611312. All URLs were accessible on 1 July 2011.

[2] A. Harder, 'Obama's conversation starter: from Howard Dean to Blue State Digital to the current President, Joe Rospars invisibly shapes the national discourse', *National Journal.com* (14 April 2009), available from http://www.nationaljournal.com/njonline/no_20090414_7299.php. T. Lowry, 'Obama's secret digital weapon: Blue State helped create the web machine that brought in the bucks and built the buzz. now it's looking to sign up more corporate clients', *Business Week* (24 June 2008), available from http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/08_27/b4091000977488.htm. E. McGirt, 'How Chris Hughes Helped launch Facebook and the Barack Obama campaign', *Fast Company* (1 April 2009), available from http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/134/boy-wonder.html.

[3] See for example C. Vaccari, '"Technology is a commodity": the internet in the 2008 United States presidential election', *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 7/4 (2010), pp.318-339.

[4] See for example N. Anstead, 'The Internet and campaign finance in the US and the UK: an institutional comparison', *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* 5/3 (2008), pp.285-302.

[5] L. Towner and D. A. Dulio, 'The Web 2.0 Election: Does the Online Medium Matter?', *Journal of Political Marketing* 10/1-2 (2011), p.165-188.

[6] A. Sullivan, 'Goodbye to all that: why Obama matters', *The Atlantic Monthly* (December 2007), available from http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/print/2007/12/goodbye-to-all-that-why-obama-matters/6445/.

[7] See N. Anstead and A. Chadwick, 'Parties, election campaigning, and the internet: toward a comparative institutional approach', in: A. Chadwick and P. N. Howard, *Routledge handbook of internet politics*, (London, UK and New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), pp.56-71.

[8] See for a collection of case studies on international online campaigns pre 2008: R. Kluver, N. W. Jankowski, K. A. Foot and S. M. Schneider (eds.), *The internet and national elections: a comparative study of web campaigning*, (London, UK and New York, NY: Routledge, 2007). France 2007: C. Vaccari, 'Surfing to the Élysée: the internet in the 2007 French elections', *French Politics* 6/1 (2008), pp.1-22. Ireland 2007: M. L. Sudulich and M. Wall, '"Every Little Helps": Cyber-Campaigning in the 2007 Irish General Election', *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 7 (2010), pp.340-355. Australia 2007: R. K. Gibson and I. MacAllister, 'Do online election campaigns win votes? The 2007 Australian "YouTube" election', *Political Communication* 28/2 (2011), pp.227-244. UK 2010: D. Lilleker and N. A. Jackson, 'Towards a more participatory style of election campaigning: the impact of Web 2.0 on the UK 2010 general election', *Policy & Internet* 2/1 (2010), Article 4. Israel: S. Haleva-Amir, 'Online Israeli politics: the current state of the art', *Israel Affairs* 17/3 (2011), pp.467-485.

[9] See for example a discussion of online media in the political news cycle in Britain: A. Chadwick, 'The political information cycle in a hybrid news system: the British Prime Minister and the "Bullygate" Affair, *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 16/1 (2011), pp.3-29. Social Media use by politicians in Sweden: A. O. Larsson, '"Extended informercials" or "Politics 2.0"? A study of Swedish political party Web sites before, during and after the 2010 election', *First Monday* 16/4 (4 April 2011), available from

http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3456/2858.
Politician's use of Twitter in the Netherlands: M. Vergeer, L. Hermans and S. Sams, 'Is the voter only a tweet away? Micro-blogging during the 2009 European Parliament election campaign in the Netherlands', *First Monday* 16/8 (1 August 2011), available from http://www.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/viewArticle/3540/3026.

[10] The CDU is the major partner in Germany's governing coalition and the party of Germany's chancellor Angela Merkel.

[11] For a critique of the term 'Americanization' see for example J. G. Blumer, '"Americanization" reconsidered: U.K.-U.S. campaign communication comparisons across time', in: W. L. Bennett and R. M. Entman (eds.), *Mediated politics: communication in the future of democracy*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.362-379. For an extensive discussion of various aspects of 'Americanization' in the German context see for example K. Kamps (ed.), *Trans-Atlantik-Trans-Portabel? Die Amerikanisierungsthese in der Politischen Kommunikation*, (Wiesbaden, Germany: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2000).

[12] B. Bimber and R. Davis, *Campaigning online: the internet in U.S. elections*, (Oxford, UK and New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp.165-171.

[13] M. Hindman, *The myth of digital democracy*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp.27-34.

[14] E-Mail conversation between Stefan Hennewig and the author on 7 July 2011.

[15] See for example T. M. Holbrook, 'Campaigns, national conditions, and U.S. presidential elections', *American Journal of Political Science* 38/4 (1994), pp.981f.

[16] See for example R. Davis, J. C. Baumgartner, P. L. Francia, and J. S. Morris, 'The internet in U.S. election campaigns', in: A. Chadwick and P. N. Howard (eds.), *Routledge handbook of internet politics*, (London, UK and New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), pp.18f.; Hindman, *Myth of digital democracy*, pp.26f.

[17] See M. Krewel, R. Schmidt-Beck and A. Wolsing, 'The campaign and its dynamics at the 2009 German general election', *German Politics* 20/1 (2011), pp.28-50.

[18] Web 2.0 tools (in this article interchangeably used with the term social media) enable users to actively post content on the web, this was heralded as a new incarnation of the former read-only web to a new read-write web and a renaissance of participatory cultures. See for example T. O'Reilly, 'What is Web 2.0: design patterns and business models for the next generation of software', (2005, September 30), available from http://oreilly.com/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html; D. Gauntlett, David, *Making is connecting: The social meaning of creativity, from DIY and knitting to YouTube and Web 2.0*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2011).

[19] C. Cain Miller, 'How Obama's internet campaign changed politics', *New York Times Bits Blog* (7 November 2008), available from http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/11/07/how-obamas-internet-campaign-changed-politics/.

[20] See for example: R. K. Nielsen, 'Mundane Internet Tools, Mobilizing Practices, and the Coproduction of Citizenship in Political Campaigns', *New Media & Society*, forthcoming; T. Towner and Dulio, 'The Web 2.0 Election'; Vaccari, 'Technology is a commodity'.

[21] D. Plouffe, *The audacity to win: the inside story and lessons of Barack Obama's historic victory* (New York, NY: Viking Penguin, 2009).

[22] P. N. Howard, *New media campaigns and the managed citizen* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[23] J. Trippi, *The revolution will not be televised, democracy the internet, and the overthrow of everything* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2004).

[24] See for example: M. Sifry, 'The Obama disconnect: what happens when myth meets reality', *tech President* (31 December 2009), available from http://techpresident.com/blog-entry/the-obama-disconnect.

[25] See for example: Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.), *Lernen von Obama? Das Internet als Ressource und Risiko für die Politik* (Gütersloh: Verlag Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2009); BITKOM, 'Das Internet wird wahlentscheidend', (19 August 2009), available from http://www.bitkom.org/60756_60749.aspx; M. Reichart, 'Die Macht des Internets' *Focus Online* (20 January 2009), available from http://www.focus.de/digital/multimedia/dld-2009/tid-13155/politik-2-0-die-macht-des-internets_aid_363558.html?drucken=1.

[26] http://my.barackobama.com.

[27] http://twitter.com/barackobama.

[28] See C. Bieber, 'Der Online-Wahlkampf im Superwahljahr 2009', in E. J. Schweitzer and S. Albrecht (eds.), *Das Internet im Wahlkampf: Analysen zur Bundestagswahl 2009* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011), pp.69-95.

[29] B. van Eimeren and B. Frees, 'Der Internetnutzer 2009 – multimedial und total vernetzt?' *Media Perspektiven* 7 (2009), pp.334-348.

[30] L. Rainie, 'Internet, broadband, and cell phone statistics', *Pew Internet & American Life Project*, (5 January 2010).

[31] T. Faas and J. Partheymüller, 'Aber jetzt?! Politische Internetnutzung in den Bundestagswahlkämpfen 2005 und 2009', in E. J. Schweitzer and S. Albrecht (eds.), *Das Internet im Wahlkampf: Analysen zur Bundestagswahl 2009* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011), pp.119-135.

[32] Ibid. p.120.

[33] A. Smith, 'The internet's role in campaign 2008', *Pew Internet & American Life Project*, (15 April 2009).

[34] K. Busemann and C. Gscheidle, 'Web 2.0: Communitys bei jungen Nutzern beliebt', *Media Perspektiven* 7 (2009), pp.356-364.

[35] R. Köcher and O. Bruttel, 'Tiefgreifender Wandel von Politik und Wirtschaft durch das Internet', *Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach* (27 June 2011).

[36] A. Smith, K. Lehman Schlozman, S. Verba and H. Brady, 'The internet and civic engagement', *Pew Internet & American Life Project*, (1 September 2009).

[37] See for example R. Köcher and O. Bruttel, 'Tiefgreifender Wandel'.

[38] See for example T. von Pape and T.Quandt, 'Wen erreicht der Wahlkampf 2.0', *Media Perspektiven* 9 (2010), pp.390-398.

[39] Edgar, 'Comment to Johnny Haeusler, Und alle so: WTF?' *Spreeblick* (17 September 2009), available from http://www.spreeblick.com/2009/09/17/und-alle-so-wtf/comment-page-1/#comment-728106.

[40] J. Haeusler, 'Und alle so: WTF?' *Spreeblick* (17 September 2009), available from http://www.spreeblick.com/2009/09/17/und-alle-so-wtf/.

[41] TerminatorX120, 'Und alle so YEAH – Flashmob Hamburg 18.09.09 – Angela Merkel', (18 September 2009), available from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_DRAIGbvUw.

[42] O. Reißmann, 'Merkel in Hamburg – und alle rufen "Yeaahh"', *Spiegel Online* (18 September 2009), available from http://www.spiegel.de/netzwelt/web/0,1518,650004,00.html.

[43] *Tagesthemen*, 'Flashmobs im Wahlkampf: Neue Formen des politischen Protestes in Form von Flashmobs', (23 September 2009), available from http://www.tagesthemen.de/multimedia/video/sendungsbeitrag12434.html.

[44] For a comprehensive discussion of the Yeaahh flashmobs see A. Jungherr, 'The challenge of participatory cultures in political campaigns: the German federal election of 2009', *Transformative Works and Fan Activism* (2012), accepted for publication.

[45] http://www.webcamp09.de/.

[46] http://www.pmt09.de/.

[47] http://www.nrw-fuer-ruettgers.de/.

[48] A. Jungherr, 'Die CDU Onlinekampagne für die Landtagswahl 2010 in Nordrhein-Westfalen: Ein Zwischenstand', *Too Bad You Never Knew Ace Hanna* (24 March 2010), available from http://andreasjungherr.net/2010/03/24/die-cdu-onlinekampagne-fur-die-landtagswahl-2010-in-nordrhein-westfalen-ein-zwischenstand/.

[49] http://www.team2009.de/. The capital letters AM stand for the initials of Angela Merkel, the CDU's leading candidate in the federal elections in 2005 and 2009.

[50] Stefan Hennewig, 'CDU-Online-Wahlkampf: Das teAM Zukunft - Ein Interview mit Stefan Hennewig durch Kendra Reinhardt', *politik-digital.de* (18 August 2005), available from http://www.politik-digital.de/edemocracy/wahlkampf/bundestagswahl05/InterviewmitChiefTeAMZukunft050818.shtml.

[51] Conversation between Stefan Hennewig and the author on 8 April 2010.

[52] http://www.team2009.de/ueber-uns.html.

[53] Conversation between Stefan Hennewig and the author on 8 April 2010.

[54] http://www.meinespd.net/.

[55] https://wurzelwerk.gruene.de.

[56] All usage numbers were collected on Friday 25 September 2009 at 7:30 pm, two days before the federal elction.

[57] See for example teAM Deutschland, 'Jetzt heißt es Punkte sammeln für den Wahlabend im KAH', *teAM Blog* (8 September 2009), available from http://www.team2009.de/team-blog/archives/3241.html.

[58] See for example a coordinated event of local teAM chapters to donate blood on a given day: teAM Deutschland, 'Unsere Blutspendeaktion am 14.08.2009', *teAM Blog* (17 August 2009), available from http://www.team2009.de/team-blog/archives/2229.html.

[59] See for example teAM Deutschland, 'Deine Frage an Angela Merkel', *teAM Blog* (21 July 2009), available from http://www.team2009.de/team-blog/archives/933.html.

[60] Juliane, 'Angela Merkel in meinVZ-Interview "Die Existenz der Piratenpartei ist für uns ein Grund, sich insbesondere mit den Fragen des Internets zu beschäftigen"', *VZblog* (24 August 2009), available from http://blog.studivz.net/2009/08/24/angela-merkel-im-meinvz-interview-%E2%80%9Edie-existenz-der-piratenpartei-ist-fur-uns-ein-grund-sich-insbesondere-mit-den-fragen-des-internets-zu-beschaftigen%E2%80%9C/.

[61] CDU TV, 'Exklusiv: Direkt aus den Communities - Zehn Fragen an Angela Merkel', *CDU TV YouTube channel* (20 August 2009), available from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FXndYiEST18; CDU TV, 'Nachgefragt bei Angie', *CDU TV YouTube channel*, (14 September 2009), available from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHrJJWuIHB0.

[62] teAM Deutschland, 'Seid dabei: Das größte Unterstützerplakat in Deutschland', *teAM Blog* (13 July 2009), available from http://www.team2009.de/team-blog/archives/737.html; teAM Deutschland, 'Das größte Unterstützerplakat Deutschlands', *teAM Website* (2009), available from http://www.team2009.de/component/content/article/867.html; CDU TV, 'Das größte Wahlplakat Deutschlands - mitten in Berlin!', *CDU TV YouTube channel* (1 September 2009), available from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSs-HuEp4XA.

[63] http://mobil.cdu.de.

[64] Conversation between Stefan Hennewig and the author on 8 April 2010.

[65] Hindman, *Myth of digital democracy*, pp.27-33.

[66] For a more extensive discussion of the evaluation see D. Frerichs, *Partizipation in politischen Grassroots-Kampagnen: Eine empirische Analyse der Mitglieder des teAM Deutschland*, unpublished manuscript.

[67] Bimber/Davis, *Campaigning online*, p.166.

[68] http://www.team2009.de/team-blog.html.

[69] For a more extensive discussion of political blogs in Germany see S. Albrecht, 'Wahlblogs revisited: Nutzung von Weblogs im Bundestagswahlkampf 2009', in E. J. Schweitzer and S. Albrecht (eds.), *Das Internet im Wahlkampf: Analysen zur Bundestagswahl 2009* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011), pp.181-200.

[70] See for example K. Wallsten, 'Agenda setting and the blogosphere: an analysis of the relationship between mainstream media and political blogs', *Review of Policy Research* 24/6 (2007), pp.567-587.

[71] See for example K. Nahon, J. Hemsley, S. Walker and M. Hussain 'Fifteen minutes of fame: the power of blogs in the lifecycle of viral political information', *Policy & Internet* 3/1 (2011), Article 2.

[72] See for example teAM Deutschland, 'Großer Deutschland-Tag mit Angela Merkel', *teAM Blog* (14 September 2009), available from http://www.team2009.de/team-blog/archives/3731.html.

[73] See for an example of political TV shows: teAM Deutschland, 'Unser TV-Tipp', *teAM Blog* (23 September 2009), available from http://www.team2009.de/team-blog/archives/4125.html; internet polls: teAM Deutschland, 'Online-Votings zum TV-Duell', *teAM Blog* (14 September 2009), available from http://www.team2009.de/team-blog/archives/3637.html.

[74] See for example teAM Deutschland, 'Unser Netzfundstück des Tages', *teAM Blog* (25 September 2009), available from http://www.team2009.de/team-blog/archives/4425.html; teAM Deutschland, 'Der Angie-Rap', *teAM Blog* (17 September 2009), available from http://www.team2009.de/team-blog/archives/3859.html.

[75] See for example teAM Deutschland, 'Wahlkampf erleben: Angela Merkel in Lübeck und Hamburg', *teAM Blog* (20 September 2009), available from http://www.team2009.de/team-blog/archives/4041.html.

[76] See for example teAM Deutschland, 'TV-Duell', *teAM Blog* (12 September 2009), available from http://www.team2009.de/team-blog/archives/3465.html; teAM Deutschland, 'Steinmeier zum TV-Duell', *teAM Blog* (13 September 2009), available from http://www.team2009.de/team-blog/archives/3617.html.

[77] See for example teAM Deutschland, 'Die Boxweltmeisterin, Regina Halmich, unterstützt das team', *teAM Blog* (11 September 2009), available from http://www.team2009.de/team-blog/archives/3447.html∞ teAM Deutschland, 'Heiner Lauterbach unterstützt Angela Merkel', *teAM Blog* (21 September 2009), available from http://www.team2009.de/team-blog/archives/4065.html.

[78] See for example teAM Deutschland, 'CDU stellt neue Plakate vor', *teAM Blog* (10 September 2009), available from http://www.team2009.de/team-blog/archives/3387.html.

[79] See for example teAM Deutschland, 'Jetzt Flagge zeigen!', *teAM Blog* (4 September 2009), available from http://www.team2009.de/team-blog/archives/3107.html.

[80] See for example teAM Deutschland, 'Das teAM der Woche', *teAM Blog* (31 July 2009), available from http://www.team2009.de/team-blog/archives/1543.html.

[81] See for example teAM Deutschland, 'Neuer teAM Blog und Offenes Visier', *teAM Blog* (28 May 2009), available from http://www.team2009.de/team-blog/archives/270.html; teAM

Deutschland, 'Yeaahh', *teAM Blog* (26 September 2009), available from
http://www.team2009.de/team-blog/archives/4599.html.

[82] Busemann/Gscheidle, 'Web 2.0'.

[83] For a more comprehensive discussion of YouTube uses in the campaign of 2009 see M. Bachl, 'Erfolgsfaktoren politische YouTube-Videos', in E. J. Schweitzer and S. Albrecht (eds.), *Das Internet im Wahlkampf: Analysen zur Bundestagswahl 2009* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011), pp.157-180.

[84] http://www.youtube.com/user/cdutv.

[85] See for example CDU TV, 'CDU-Wahlkampfauftakt: Wir haben die Kraft!', *CDU TV YouTube channel* (6 September 2009), available from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gb6nSCixVo.

[86] See for example CDU TV, 'Wir sind das teAM Deutschland! Heute: Roland Koch', *CDU TV YouTube channel* (22 July 2009), available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGOMzSu2vGU.

[87] See for example CDU TV, 'CDU-Wahlkampfauftakt: Die Rede von Angela Merkel', *CDU TV YouTube channel* (7 September 2009), available from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crvgwiQqy4g.

[88] See for example CDU TV, 'Hallo CDU TV! Heute: Kühlungsborn', *CDU TV YouTube channel* (22 April 2009), available from http://youtu.be/aEZAY81HgJI.

[89] See for example CDU TV, 'Nahaufnahme: Der CDU-Kandidatenservice', *CDU TV YouTube channel* (8 April 2009), available from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bofWzL4-muY.

[90] See for example CDU TV, 'Der teAM Deutschland-Song: WIR SIND WIR', *CDU TV YouTube channel* (14 August 2009), available from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1WwToH55zcM.

[91] See for example CDU TV, 'Nahaufnahme - Das teAM Deutschland', *CDU TV YouTube channel* (9 March 2009), available from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9YJFPTS61o.

[92] See for example CDU TV, 'Gemeinsam können wir es schaffen', *CDU TV YouTube channel* (24 September 2009), available from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EFAVRK9oUCU.

[93] See for example CDU TV, 'Wahlkampf intern: 18. September', *CDU TV YouTube channel* (18 September 2009), available from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mAkaKCeG9Q.

[94] Jungherr, 'Nordrhein-Westfalen: Ein Zwischenstand'.

[95] For a comprehensive discussion of the concept and its role in German online campaigns see E. J. Schweitzer, 'Mediatisierung im Online-Wahlkampf: Befunde einer vergleichenden Inhaltsanalyse deutscher Partei-Websites zu den Wahljahren 2002-2009', in E. J. Schweitzer and S. Albrecht (eds.), *Das Internet im Wahlkampf: Analysen zur Bundestagswahl 2009* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011), pp.267-296.

[96] CDU TV, 'Exklusiv: Das CDU TV-Sommerinterview mit Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel', *CDU TV YouTube channel* (21. July 2009), available from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYfsthFyrlw.

[97] See for example: *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 'Schönen Urlaub, Kanzlerin!' (21 July 2009), available from http://www.abendblatt.de/politik/deutschland/article1104545/Schoenen-Urlaub-Kanzlerin.html; *N24*, 'Merkel macht Urlaub in den Bergen' (21 July 2009), available from http://www.n24.de/news/newsitem_5252974.html.

[98] CDU TV, 'Wahlaufruf von Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel zur Bundestagswahl am 27. September 2009', *CDU TV YouTube channel* (22. September 2009), available from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vkwc3n27hiU.

[99] CDU TV, 'teAM Deutschland-Song'.

[100] TerminatorX120, 'Und alle so YEAH'.

[101] For a comprehensive account of Germany's social networking sites and their role during the campaign of 2009 see J. Kuhnert and J. Schmidt, 'Hub, Fine-Tuner oder Business as Usual? Social Network Sites und die Bundestagswahl 2009', in E. J. Schweitzer and S. Albrecht (eds.), *Das Internet im Wahlkampf: Analysen zur Bundestagswahl 2009* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011), pp.226-243.

[102] Busemann/Gscheidle, 'Web 2.0'.

[103] http://www.meinvz.net/l/about_us.

[104] http://www.studivz.net/.

[105] http://www.meinvz.net/.

[106] http://www.schuelervz.net/.

[107] Anne, '15 Millionen Mitglieder und ein neuer Name: studiVZ Ltd. heißt ab sofort VZ-Netzwerke und baut Platz 1 in Deutschland weiter aus', *VZblog* (25 August 2009), available from http://blog.studivz.net/2009/08/25/15-millionen-mitglieder-und-ein-neuer-name-studivz-ltd-heist-ab-sofort-vz-netzwerke-und-baut-platz-1-in-deutschland-weiter-aus/.

[108] See for example K. Roggenkamp, 'Wir würden auch Edelprofile listen ….', *wahl.de* (9 April 2009), available from http://www.wahl.de/blog/090409/wir-wuerden-auch-edelprofile-listen; K. Roggenkamp, 'Vom Edelprofil zur Wahlzentrale - Wahlkampf jetzt auch bei StudiVZ', *wahl.de* (27 April 2009), available from http://www.wahl.de/blog/090427/vom-edelprofil-zur-wahlzentrale-wahlkampf-jetzt-auch-bei-studivz.

[109] http://www.studivz.net/wahlzentrale.

[110] Johannes, 'Wahlzentrale online!', *VZblog* (19 May 2009), available from http://blog.studivz.net/2009/05/19/wahlzentrale-online/.

[111] Juliane, 'Erst fragen, dann wählen: Ganz Deutschland interviewt die Spitzenkandidaten/Live-Sendung von ZDF, ZEIT ONLINE und den VZ-Netzwerken', *VZblog* (28 August 2009), available from http://blog.studivz.net/2009/08/28/%E2%80%9Eerst-fragen-dann-wahlen%E2%80%9C-ganz-deutschland-interviewt-die-spitzenkandidaten-live-sendung-von-zdf-zeit-online-und-den-vz-netzwerken/.

[112] See for example S. Ruff, 'Alle außer Angela', *politik-digital.de* (17 September 2009), available from http://politik-digital.de/studivz-merkel-userfragen; in reaction: S. Hennewig, comment on Simon Ruff, 'Alle außer Angela', *politik-digital.de* (17 September 2009), comment posted on (17 September 2009), available at http://politik-digital.de/studivz-merkel-userfragen.

[113] http://www.meinvz.net/AngelaMerkel.

[114] http://www.meinvz.net/cdu.

[115] See for example M. Hamann, 'Online Wahlkampf: 26-jährige ist Merkels Stimme im Netz', *Spiegel Online* (25 September 2009), available from http://www.spiegel.de/netzwelt/netzpolitik/0,1518,651026,00.html.

[116] https://www.xing.com/.

[117] http://www.linkedin.com.

[118] XING, 'Wie wird XING genutzt?', *XING Hilfe und FAQ*, available from https://www.xing.com/help/hilfe-und-faq-2/wie-nutze-ich-xing-effektiv-55/uber-uns-155/wie-wird-xing-genutzt-157.

[119] S. Schippmann, 'Bundestagswahl 2009 bei XING', *XING Blog* (5 August 2009), available from http://blog.xing.com/2009/08/bundestagswahl-2009-bei-xing/.

[120] teAM Deutschland, 'CDU Deutschlands ab sofort auf XING', *teAM Blog* (5 August 2009), available from http://www.team2009.de/team-blog/archives/1663.html.

[121] P. Roth, 'Facebook Nutzerzahlen in Deutschland (August 2009)', *Facebook Marketing.de* (26 August 2009), available from http://facebookmarketing.de/zahlen_fakten/facebook-nutzerzahlen-in-deutschland-august-2009.

[122] http://www.facebook.com/AngelaMerkel.

[123] http://www.facebook.com/CDU.

[124] http://www.facebook.com/teamdeutschland.

[125] http://www.facebook.com/FrankWalterSteinmeier.

[126] http://www.facebook.com/SPD.

[127] Jungherr, 'Die CDU Onlinekampagne'.

[128] See for example I. Burrell, 'The online kingmaker: Facebook goes hunting for voters', *The Independent* (22 March 2010), available from http://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/online/the-online-kingmaker-facebook-goes-hunting-for-voters-1924908.html.

[129] See for example Christiane, 'Internet-Rekord für Angela Merkel im studiVZ/meinVZ: Eine Million Seitenaufrufe und 50.000 Anhänger auf ihrem VZ-Profil', *VZblog* (6 July 2009), available from http://blog.studivz.net/2009/07/06/internet-rekord-fur-angela-merkel-im-studivzmeinvz-eine-million-seitenaufrufe-und-50000-anhanger-auf-ihrem-vz-profil/; J. Kuri, 'Wahlzentrale bei StudiVZ: Angela Merkel punktet', *heise online* (6 July 2009), available from http://www.heise.de/newsticker/meldung/Wahlzentrale-bei-StudiVZ-Angela-Merkel-punktet-7281.html; M. Shahd and A. Brakel, 'Angela Merkel liegt im Wahlkampf 2.0 vorne', *Bitkom* (16 August 2009), available from http://www.bitkom.org/de/markt_statistik/64018_60824.aspx.

[130] See for example S. Bench-Capon, 'Gauck ist schon Facebook-Präsident', *Der Tagesspiegel* (9 June 2010), available from http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/gauck-ist-schon-der-facebook-praesident/1854754.html.

[131] See for example *Bild.de*, 'Krieg auf Facebook', (5 October 2010), available from http://www.bild.de/politik/2010/politik/facebook-wird-zum-kriegsschauplatz-14198284.bild.html.

[132] See for example C. Heidböhmer, 'Guttenberg-Anhänger attaktieren Medien', *stern.de* (3 March 2011), available from http://www.stern.de/politik/deutschland/facebook-gruppen-machen-mobil-guttenberg-anhaenger-attackieren-medien-1659765.html.

[133] d. m. boyd and N. B. Ellison, 'Social network sites: definition, history, and scholarship', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13/1 (2007), Artikel 11., p.211.

[134] http://twitter.com/webcamp09.

[135] For a comprehensive discussion of German politician's use of Twitter in the run up to the campaign see A. Jungherr, 'Twitternde Politiker: Zwischen buntem Rauschen und Bürgernähe 2.0', in C. Bieber, M. Eifert, T. Groß and J. Lamla (eds.), *Soziale Netze in der digitalen Welt: Das Internet zwischen egalitärer Beteiligung und ökonomischer Macht* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2009), pp.99-127.

[136] For a comprehensive discussion of the role of Twitter during the campaign see P. Jürgens and A. Jungherr 'Wahlkampf vom Sofa aus: Twitter im Bundestagswahlkampf 2009', in E. J. Schweitzer and S. Albrecht (eds.), *Das Internet im Wahlkampf: Analysen zur Bundestagswahl 2009* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011), pp.201-225.

[137] http://twitter.com/cdu_news.

[138] See for example cdu_news, 'CDU startet Wahlkampf Schluss-Spurt', *@cdu_news Twitter-Feed* (25 September 2009), available from http://twitter.com/cdu_news/status/4368928441.

[139] See for example cdu_news, '#merkel im Rückblick', *@cdu_news Twitter-Feed* (26 September 2009), available from http://twitter.com/cdu_news/status/4391138387.

[140] See for example cdu_news, 'Gespräch mit merkel und pofalla', *@cdu_news Twitter-Feed* (26 September 2009), available from http://twitter.com/cdu_news/status/4391113127.

[141] http://twitter.com/TeamDeutschland.

[142] See for example teAMDeutschland, 'In einer Stunde geht's los', *@teamdeutschland Twitter-Feed* (26 September 2009), available from http://twitter.com/teamdeutschland/status/4389645325.

[143] See for example teAMDeutschland, '@malte_politicus', *@teamdeutschland Twitter-Feed* (13 September 2009), available from http://twitter.com/teamdeutschland/status/3961973966.

[144] See for example teAMDeutschland, '@PeterStephan', *@teamdeutschland Twitter-Feed* (25 September 2009) available from http://twitter.com/teamdeutschland/status/4371933580.

[145] See for example teAMDeutschland, 'Unser Netzfundstück des Tages', *@teamdeutschland Twitter-Feed* (17 September 2009), available from http://twitter.com/teamdeutschland/status/4050889030.

[146] See for example teAMDeutschland, 'Bundeskanzlerin Angela #Merkel', *@teamdeutschland Twitter-Feed* (26 September 2009), available from http://twitter.com/teamdeutschland/status/4391012426; teAMDeutschland, 'Angela Merkel hat mit ihrer Rede begonnen', *@teamdeutschland Twitter-Feed* (26 September 2009), available from http://twitter.com/teamdeutschland/status/4391402269.

[147] The follower counts of these specific accounts are based on data provided by the Twitter API on 27 September 2009. These numbers are significantly lower than the follower counts that were shown on Twitter accounts themselves. On 26 September 2009 these read 4.420 followers for @cdu_news and 2.219 followers for @teamdeutschland. The author believes the API (application programming interface) request to be the more precise and replicable way of determining Twitter usage stats. Still, the reason for these differing counts remains unclear and important to keep in mind when comparing Twitter stats.

[148] A. Jungherr, 'Twitter in politics: lessons learned during the German Superwahljahr 2009', Position Paper presented at the *Workshop on Microblogging at the CHI10 (ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems)* (10-15 April 2010, Atlanta, USA), available from http:cs.unc.edu/~julia/accepted-papers/Superwahljahr.pdf.

[149] A. Jungherr, P. Jürgens and H. Schoen, 'Why the Pirate Party won the German election of 2009 or the trouble with predictions: a response to Tumasjan, A., Sprenger, T. O., Sander, P. G., & Welpe, I. M. "Predicting elections with Twitter: what 140 characters reveal about political sentiment"', *Social Science Computer Review* (forthcoming).