

# ECHO CHAMBERS, EXPERTS AND ACTIVISTS: NETWORKS OF MEDIATED POLITICAL COMMUNICATION (ECANET)



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ECANET consortium looks at how the networked and digitalized media shapes, interacts with and penetrates democratic political communication and decision-making. ECANET analyses these questions through the lens of climate change politics, a crucial system level challenge to societies in the 21st century. A key entry point to mediated politics is the phenomenon of echo chambers: closed clusters of like-minded actors that can lead to polarization of opinions, decline of public debate, erosion of the epistemic dimension of democracy and its capacity to decision-making. Conceptually and methodologically the project develops a model of political communication as a system of multilayered and interconnected communication networks.

ECANET investigates how different and overlapping media and communication networks interact to create (or resist) echo chamber structures. In particular, the project examines to role of scientific expertise and political activism in climate politics in the relationship between media and policy networks of climate change. The empirical work focuses on the interconnections of professional media, social media and policy networks. Conceptualizing all three domains as networks, ECANET investigates their interdependencies by applying methods of multilayer network analysis. A better understanding of the cumulative effect of these different domains of political communication will produce insights to the emergence echo chambers and polarization – and help identify resources of resilience against them. It will help us specifically examine the roles that experts and activists play in the current media environment.

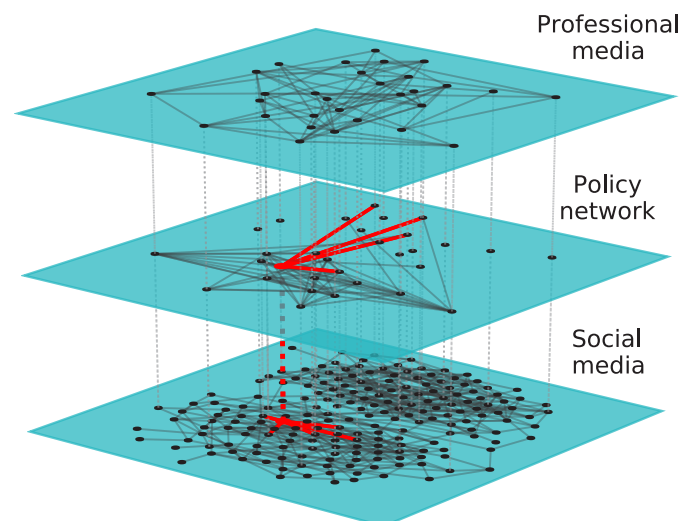
The work of the consortium is organized into three thematic foci and work packages (WP).

**WP1** analyses how different mechanisms contribute to the emergence of echo chambers and polarization in each of the three political communication networks (professional,

social media and policy actors) and in the interactions between these networks. It also focuses on the role played by political institutions and culture through comparing the multilayer systems a) across countries with different levels of political polarization and with different climate policy contexts (FIN, SWE, USA), and b) across time, mapping the evolution of the multilayered networks.

**WP2** studies the construction of expertise and authority across the three network domains from two perspectives. It investigates a) the positions of experts in multilayered networks of professional media, social media and political actors and b) analyses moments contestation and negotiation of networked expert authority.

**WP3** investigates non-governmental organizations and environmental activists, and their attempts to democratize climate change communication. It focuses on the communicative action of activists across the three network domains and seeks to understand the ways in which connective civic action actually influences politics in the multilayered networks of climate policy.



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