

Data Donation for Communication Research

Pre-Conference at the European Communication Conference

ECC 2026, Brno 7-8 September 2026

Data Donation for Communication Research

The collection of data donations to access digital trace data for academic research has quickly gained importance in communication research. Hereby, users of digital platforms and services such as Google, Instagram, TikTok, Spotify, or ChatGPT are asked to download their personal data and donate these data to a research project. This makes a wide range of data accessible for researchers and offers great opportunities for communication research. For researchers who are not yet familiar with data donation or would like to learn more about specific tools to conduct data donation projects, the ECC26-pre-conference offers an introductory workshop to data donation for communication researchers. Furthermore, the pre-conference provides a platform for all data donation researchers to present their empirical insights and to address challenges they are facing when applying this method. Participation is free of charge and the two half-day events can be booked independent of each other.

Programme Overview

Monday, September 7

19:00 Social Event

Tuesday, 8 September

09:00 – 09:10 Welcome Address

09:10 – 10:50 Session 1: Recruitment, Tools & Qualitative Approaches (Presentations & Tool Demonstrations)

10:50 – 11:20 Coffee Break

11:20 – 12:50 Session 2: Applications of Data Donation in Communication Research (Presentations)

12:50 – 13:00 Closing Remarks

13:00 – 14:30 *Lunch break*

14:30 – 18:00 Introduction to Data Donation for Communication Research (Workshop)

Applications of Data Donation in Communication Research (Pre-Conference Presentations)

Presentation Schedule

09:00 – 09:10	Welcome address Thomas N. Friemel, Sina Horner & Nico Pfiffner <i>University of Zurich</i>
09:10 – 10:50	Session 1: Recruitment, Tools & Qualitative Approaches This first session addresses the methodological foundations of data donation research, covering recruitment strategies, technical tools and infrastructure for data collection, as well as qualitative approaches to studying platform use. <i>Chair: Ernesto de León</i>
Recruitment	The Role of Images in Data Donation Recruitment: Evidence from an Eye-Tracking Experiment Elisabeth Schmidbauer & Jörg Haßler <i>LMU Munich & University of Oslo (UiO)</i>
Tools	The Observatory for Platform Audits (OPA): A Privacy-Preserving Framework for Automated Social Media Data Donations Simon Kruschinski, Sebastian Stier, Jessica Daikeler, Joachim Piepenburg, Felix Schmidt, Abhisek Dash, Sai Keerthana Karnam, & Krishna P. Gummadi <i>GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Science & Max Planck Institute for Software Systems</i>
	Using TikTok Portability API for Data Donation Projects Nico Pfiffner & Thomas N. Friemel <i>University of Zurich</i>
	Seamless Data Donation for Music Streaming Research: Integrating Listening Repertoires and Survey Data via Spotify Markus Radke & Steffen Lepa <i>Technische Universität Berlin</i>
Qualitative Approaches	Integrating Data Donation into Qualitative Research on Algorithmic Recommendation Systems: A Digital Ethnographic Approach to Studying Ordinary Users on TikTok Michelle Gay Nidoy <i>Queensland University of Technology</i>
	Studying Rare Disease Caregiving Communities on Social Media: A Data Donation-Based Content Analysis of Knowledge Sharing and Peer Support Anthea Xiaohua He, Wenwen Guo, & Annemiek Linn <i>University of Amsterdam & Tsinghua University</i>
10:50 – 11:20	<i>Coffee Break</i>

11:20 – 12:50	Session 2: Applications of Data Donation for Communication Research The second session presents empirical applications of data donation methods, examining patterns of platform use and inequality as well as algorithmic mediation in news engagement. <i>Chair: Elisabeth Schmidbauer</i>
	Who watches older YouTubers? Testing age homophily with behavioural trace data Edit Pauló & Zoltán Kmetty <i>Eötvös Loránd University</i>
	Examining Disconnection Inequality from Algorithmic-Mediated Platforms: Combining Survey and Data Donations of Facebook and YouTube logs Minh Hao Nguyen & Alain Starke <i>University of Amsterdam</i>
	Alternative News Influencers and the Production of Digital News Publics: A ‘Produsage’ Perspective Salla Tuomola, Eva Mayerhöffer, & Jakob Bæk Kristensen <i>Roskilde University</i>
	Conversational Steering and Agentic Curation: Using AI-Chat Donations to Understand LLM-Mediated News Engagement in Belgium Daniel Jurg & Sarah Vis <i>Vrije Universiteit Brussel</i>
	How does Political Efficacy Condition Clicks on Politics? Understanding Information-Selection Behaviour in Algorithmic Feeds Over Time Jin Wan, Theo Araujo, Natali Helberger, & Claes de Vreese <i>University of Amsterdam</i>
12:50 – 13:00	Closing Thomas N. Friemel, Sina Horner & Nico Pfiffner <i>University of Zurich</i>

Organizational information

Date:	8 September morning (09:00 – 13:00)
Location:	Faculty of Arts, Arna Nováka 1, 602 00 Brno in room B2.43. It is a lecture room situated on the fourth floor of Building B2 .
Organizers:	Thomas Friemel, Sina Horner & Nico Pfiffner, Data Donation Lab (University of Zurich)
Committee:	Ernesto de León (University of Amsterdam), Thomas Friemel (University of Zurich), Valerie Hase (University of Klagenfurt), Sina Horner (University of Zurich), Nico Pfiffner (University of Zurich), Elisabeth Schmidbauer (LMU Munich)
Registration:	For registration to the pre-conference presentations use this form .
Registration deadline:	1 September 2026
Fees:	Participation is free of charge

Introduction to Data Donation for Communication Research (Workshop)

The workshop on Data Donation for Communication Research will provide 1) an introduction to this new approach, 2) an introduction to and demonstration of the Data Donation Module—an open-source web application for data donation projects, and 3) guidance for designing your own data donation project. By the end of the workshop, you will understand the advantages and limitations of collecting data donations for research and gain practical knowledge of how a data donation collection can be implemented in your own research projects.

Workshop Structure and Agenda

- 1. Introduction to data donation:** We will provide a brief overview of what data donation is, why it is a promising new approach for communication research, and what key considerations are needed when designing a data donation project.
- 2. Introduction to the Data Donation Module:** We will present the Data Donation Module, an open-source web application that can be used to conduct data donation projects across all digital (media) platforms and other digital traces. This section includes a walkthrough of setting up a project, including crucial design decisions, recruitment of participants, monitoring of a project, and data analysis.
- 3. Best Practices:** We provide insights into various data donation projects and outline the most important dos and don'ts—from ethical approval to publishing your results.

Organizational information

Date & Time:	8 September afternoon (14:30 – 18:00)
Location:	Faculty of Arts, Arna Nováka 1, 602 00 Brno in room B2.43. It is a lecture room situated on the fourth floor of Building B2 .
Organizers:	Prof. Dr. Thomas Friemel, Sina Horner & Dr. Nico Pfiffner, Data Donation Lab (University of Zurich)
Registration:	For workshop registration use this form .
Registration deadline:	1 September 2026
Fees:	Participation is free of charge