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Handledare: Asta Cepaite Nilsson
Examinator: Howard Nothhaft

"I am a stupid Youtuber, and I just won the election!"

A Multimodal Analysis of Calibrated Amateurism and the Framing of the European Parliament in Fidias Panayiotou's Instagram Communication

SIGGE HEDSTRÖM & NGHI TRAN

Lund University
Department of Communication
Bachelor's Thesis in Strategic Communication



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We would like to emphasize that our contribution to this thesis has been equal.

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Abstract

As influencers infiltrate political institutions, they are fundamentally redefining the rules of political expertise. This paper examines Fidias Panayiotou, a YouTuber turned Member of the European Parliament (MEP), and his strategic practice of an amateur persona. The study adopts a qualitative case study design and multimodal content analysis to investigate Fidias's construction of political identity through calibrated amateurism on Instagram during his initial period in the European Parliament (EP). Furthermore, the study explores how these platform-driven performances frame the institution itself, through his digital communication. The findings illustrate a systematic application of calibrated amateurism, where perceived non-expertise is continuously constructed to foster trust and legitimacy. By contrasting vlog-style aesthetics with the formal bureaucracy of the EP, Fidias establishes an alternative authenticity that extends beyond traditional institutional legitimacy. This study highlights a significant accountability dilemma as calibrated amateurism optimizes digital relatability, it simultaneously risks diminishing institutional authority, consequently reinforces a tension where performed amateurism undermines political legitimacy.

Keywords: Calibrated amateurism; Framing theory; Digital political communication; Influencer politicians; Political legitimacy; Multimodality; Instagram; European Parliament, Platform logics.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In this section, we present the background, problematization and aim of this study, along with our research questions and limitations. We present our background and problematization to contextualize our case within the current field of study. The aim of this study functions as an extension of previous research to identify a research gap within the field of strategic communication.

The lines between entertainment, social media and politics have become increasingly blurred (Abidin, 2017). Along with the progression of mediatisation, social and political activities increasingly assume the form of the media, compelling political actors to adapt to and eventually internalize media logic (Strömbäck, 2008). This evolution of political communication has fundamentally shifted emphasis from institutional expertise and professionalism, towards a paradigm of emotional engagement, platform visibility and personalization (Dijck, Poell, Waal, 2018). Consequently, the success of contemporary politicians is increasingly measured by the ability to foster personal and emotional connections with the audience, rather than their political experience, agenda or expertise (Vukovic, 2024). This development has brought forth the emergence of influencer politicians, who adopt the style of social media influencers in order to establish a seemingly intimate relationship with their audience to cement their political capital (Starita & Trillò, 2021).

This development suggests that traditional models of celebrity politics and celebrity politicians are not sufficient to explain the digital environment (Starita & Trillò, 2021). In contrast to traditional celebrity politicians, who rely on celebrity practices such as glamour and distance, the influencer politician utilizes micro-celebrity practices to foster affective intimacy with their audience (Starita & Trillò, 2021). Fundamental to these micro-celebrity practices is the strategy of calibrated amateurism, a deliberate performance of incompleteness, rawness and originality, designed to be perceived as authentic by the audience (Abidin, 2017).

In regards to influencer politicians, our study focuses on the case of Fidias Panayiotou, a Youtuber who transitioned from being an online prankster to becoming a member of the EP following the 2024 Cyprus election (Triga & Ioannidis, 2025). The young

influencer represents a shift in political mobilization as he, despite his lack of political experience or expertise, managed to secure a significant portion of the votes through digital content engagement (Triga & Ioannidis, 2025). His presence in the EP serves as an interesting case for whether an entertainment persona can successfully navigate and perhaps transform a complex bureaucratic institution. By positioning himself as an ordinary citizen navigating the system rather than an expert in it, he challenges the very definition of institutional competence. Therefore, his institutional entry into the political sphere is considered to present both concerns and possibilities, in regards to strategic political communication (Triga & Ioannidis, 2025).

1.2 Problematization

In a mediatised political landscape, amplified by an attention economy in an era defined by a growing distrust of elites, the influencer politician's strongest asset is their ability to adapt their communication to personalized ethos and perceived authenticity (Finlayson, 2022). Traditional political legitimacy is built on institutional authority (Vukovic, 2024), however, Fidias constructs his legitimacy by performing the opposite, an amateur persona that openly expresses his lack of political competence (Triga & Ioannidis, 2025). Contemporary research has predominantly examined influencer politics through the lens of digital populism, focusing on how charismatic leaders use rhetoric to represent the will of the people against the corrupted elite. In this study, we acknowledge digital populism as a significant contextual foundation for Fidias's success (Triga & Ioannidis, 2025). On the other hand, such frameworks do not fully capture how influencer politicians employ multimodal communicative strategies to establish an amateur political persona, which further fosters legitimacy. By investigating the strategic implication of calibrated amateurism in digital political communication, this study seeks to gain insights into how this performance contributes to frame the EP. This introduces a critical gap within the field of strategic political communication regarding how the intentional performance of non-expertise functions as a strategic asset, rather than a liability.

1.3 Aim

Against this background, the study aims to examine how calibrated amateurism operates as a strategic communicative resource in the contemporary digital landscape, and how this strategy contributes to framing the EP. Through a multimodal analysis of Fidias's Instagram

reels, this thesis explores how the performance of calibrated amateurism serves as a strategy to establish political identity and legitimacy.

1.4 Research Questions

To attain the study aims, this paper is guided by the following research questions:

- *How does Fidias Panayiotou construct a persona of amateurism through multimodal communicative resources in his Instagram communication?*
- *How does the implication of calibrated amateurism in Fidias Panayiotou's Instagram communication contribute to frame the EP, further re-negotiating the perceived institutional legitimacy associated with the institution?*

1.5 Limitations

The study is strictly limited to the analysis of selected social media content on Instagram, in the form of short video material (reels) and solely centered on communicative practices rather than institutional outcomes. To clarify, by researching perceived institutional legitimacy on Fidias's instagram content, this study does not make any claims regarding the institutional legitimacy of the European Parliament. Rather, our study focuses on the perceived legitimacy through multimodal resources in a digital environment. Furthermore, the study seeks to understand the broader implications of Fidias' communicative approach instead of evaluating his impact as a politician.

1.6 Disposition

The thesis is structured as follows. The next chapter reviews previous research on influencer communicative strategies, influencer politicians, mediatization, parasocial relations and previous research of Fidias. This is followed by the theoretical framework, which outlines the key concepts used in the analysis, calibrated amateurism and framing theory. The methodology chapter presents the research design, including the selection of material, data collection methods, and analytical approach. The empirical analysis follows, where the theoretical framework is applied to the selected material in order to examine how legitimacy is constructed through communicative practices. Next, a discussion of the findings, their theoretical implications, and their relevance for understanding the future of political communication and institutional legitimacy, particularly within the European Parliament. Finally, the thesis concludes with a conclusion of our findings.

2. Literature Review

In this section, we present previous research relevant to our study. The purpose of this literature review is to contextualize our research questions with existing knowledge.

2.1 From Institutional Authority towards Relatability

In the context of social media and its algorithmic functions, political actors are increasingly encouraged to adapt their communication to personalized ethos, rather than institutional logic (Finlayson, 2022). For example, politicians' daily media posts such as a “good morning selfie” strategically foster a stronger sense of affective intimacy, which in turn bridges the gap between ordinary citizens and politicians. Once the public develops greater political trust, their political agenda is expected to be ultimately influenced (Starita & Trillò, 2021). Building on this, such communicative practices can foster parasocial relations, understood as asymmetrical bonds between a digital actor and their audience (Bérail, Guillon, Bungener, 2019). By continuous exposure to informal, intimate and personalized content, political actors can create a sense of emotional closeness and familiarity with their followers, despite the interaction being one-sided. In digital political communication, these parasocial relations become valuable as audiences perceive politicians as relatable individuals rather than institutional representatives. Consequently, legitimacy and political trust become increasingly tied to perceived intimacy and emotional accessibility rather than institutional expertise or professionalism (Bérail, Guillon, Bungener, 2019).

This development can also be understood through the lens of digital populist communication. Vuković and Krapić (2025) present the populist influencer, who utilize influencer practices to amplify populist messages of the people versus the corrupted elites. The article demonstrates how political legitimacy gradually departs from its traditional boundaries, as a result of influencer logic and populist performance (Vuković & Krapić, 2025). Additionally, Pérez-Curiel and Naharro (2019) concludes that the increasing focus on spectacles in the contemporary media landscape explains why politicians communicate through emotionally engaging content instead of institutional or ideological substance. In this regard, politicians can transform the political landscape into a mediatized performance based on scandalization, to bypass institutional power structures (Pérez-Curiel & Naharro, 2019).

2.2 The Production Paradox

Within this digital attention economy, influencers, in pursuit of communicative success tend to shift toward a more relatable persona, rather than being polished perfectly (Abidin, 2017). This relatable persona can be achieved through elements instancing for spontaneity, rawness and unedited transparency. Nevertheless, this reveals a significant paradox in how technical competence and professional skills are being strategically employed to curate an image of amateurism (Abidin, 2017, Arnesson, 2023). By consistently practicing calibrated amateurism, influencers present a staged environment, which deliberately includes technical or intellectual flaws as resources to counter the audience's skepticism toward self-branding via social media (Abidin, 2017). Therefore, the literature suggests that authenticity in the digital environment is predominantly managed by professionals to erase the visible traces of professionalism (Abidin, 2017, Arnesson, 2023, Maares, Banjac & Hanusch, 2021). Therefore, the literature suggests that authenticity, in most cases, is strategically managed by professionals to erase the visible traces of professionalism, within the digital landscape.

2.3 Strategic Knowledge Management

Previous studies discuss knowledge and expertise as critical mechanisms for authority in the political landscape (Dijck, Poell, Waal, 2018). This is conceptualized by how political actors practice epistemic gatekeeping through conveying deep technical expertise to exclude and disregard the opposition as ignorant and uninformed, in order to create a collective identity (Vallström & Törnberg, 2025). In contrast, Maddox (2024) introduces the concept of calibrated expertise to describe how professionals are utilizing institutional knowledge at the heart of their personal brand while simultaneously using influencer aesthetics to humanize their authority. This strategy and Abidin's (2017) calibrated amateurism form a dynamic spectrum in how actors balance their technical expertise and performed relatability to gain digital legitimacy (Abidin, 2017, Maddox, 2024).

Contradictionally, Triga and Ioannidis (2025) describe how Fidias effectively emerged as a political candidate by repeatedly and deliberately emphasizing his own lack of political background. Examining how politicians deliberately display non-expertise to avoid future critique, protect status and interests, research highlights that ignorance can function as a strategic communicative resource, especially in political communication (Crewe, 2025). Additionally, this strategy is often accompanied with humor or irony, especially in communication about personal weaknesses, to preemptively inoculate against counter arguments before they have been presented (Compton, 2025).

Influencers can potentially shape social media user's attitudes by presenting political issues through simplified terminologies and narratives (Schmuck et al., 2022). Authors argue that influencers' role in the online communication of political issues is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it has the potential to increase political engagement and make politics more comprehensive. On one hand, it has the potential to increase political engagement and make politics more comprehensive. On the other hand, it risks oversimplifying political complexity, leading to increasing cynicism towards politicians and institutions who cannot solve these perceived "easy to fix" issues (Schmuck et al., 2022). Put together, these strands of research point towards a broader shift in political communication, where personalization, relatability, digital populism and the strategic performance of authenticity are used in the pursuit of legitimization. In contrast to traditional, institutional knowledge, this new paradigm suggests that political authenticity is continuously negotiated by platform aesthetics and emotional proximity.

3. Theoretical Framework

In this section, we present our theoretical framework which is structured around two key theories: Calibrated Amateurism and Framing. These theories are utilized as tools for understanding how Fidias use Instagram as a platform for self-presentation. Specifically how he strategically positions himself as an amateur and how he, as a political representative, frames the parliament through his content.

3.1 Calibrated Amateurism

3.1.1 Authenticity as Performance: Impression Management

To explain the connections between authenticity and calibrated amateurism, Abidin, (2017) underscores that the concept of calibrated amateurism is a modern take on Goffman's theory of impression management (Abidin, 2017). In his book "The presentation of self in everyday life", Goffman (1956) explored how individuals utilize both verbal and non-verbal signals to create and maintain an image of themselves in a social context. Through social signals, Goffman (1956) describes how individuals perform routines to influence how they are perceived by others, especially when striving to achieve specific goals, gaining status or approval.

The author presents dramaturgical metaphors such as frontstage and backstage which describe an individual's performance, displayed publicly for an audience. In the frontstage, performers take on an appearance and a manner which combines both the performer's social status and expectations that the performer will play in the coming situation (Goffman, 1956). The latter refers to a private space where the individual performers are "out of character" and behind the scenes (Goffman, 1956). In this stage, individuals are perceived as more honest and can present themselves free from the demands of maintaining a public image (Shulman, 2022) In a contemporary perspective, social media has blurred the separation of front and backstage as self presentation is part of a middle stage of social life that makes private life more visible (Shulman, 2022).

3.1.2 Platform Society

Moving this dramaturgical arena into our contemporary digital landscape, Dijck, Poell, Waal (2018) contextualize how the attention economy and platform logics explain the shift towards a media landscape built on emotional engagement. The platform society is defined as a

connective world where economic and social traffic is extended through a global ecosystem based on online platforms. In this society, platform logics have emerged as a mutual articulation of the technologies, economic models and user practices. The authors present three core platform mechanisms that drive the platform society's logic, namely, datafication, commodification and selection. Datafication relates to the algorithmic processing of human emotions, social interactions and physical locations into predictive analyses and real-time monitoring. In addition, commodification explains how social activity becomes a tradable commodity. Lastly, selection demonstrates how algorithmic user-driven selection replaces traditional expertise with personalized filter bubbles and trends. Within this construction, the attention economy acts as the primary engine of growth as it transforms human attention into tradable commodities (Dijck, Poell, Waal, 2018).

Consequently, the authors Dijck, Poell, Waal (2018) present how this enables a shift in how information is based on algorithmic selection which prioritizes virality and spreadability to keep users attention focused within the ecosystem. Thus, visibility becomes a key factor for success in digital media (Dijck, Poell, Waal, 2018).

3.1.3 Operationalizing Calibrated Amateurism

Building on this, the emergence of calibrated amateurism is a result of how digital actors respond to the new demands of an attention economy and the need for emotionally engaging content. Today's digital audience is most captivated by a display of human emotionality and volatility, making the subject perceived as authentic. This extends whether or not the actors really are amateurs by status or practice. In her study, Abidin (2017) contextualized calibrated amateurism through studying family influencers who utilize calibrated amateurism to convince their followers that they are "family before influencers" and value the care, well-being and enjoyment of their family above their commerce. While the original study is based in a context of family influencers, the structural mechanics are universal for all social media influencers (Abidin, 2017).

Furthermore, the performative staging of an amateur aesthetic is particularly rewarding for influencers, since they are content producers on social media who originally debuted as passion-driven, independent and unpaid amateurs (Abidin, 2017). However, the increase in influencers, the hypervisual mediums of social media and the fight for lucrative earnings in social media have led the display of originality and rawness to become a more conscious performance (Abidin, 2017).

Operationalizing this performance, Abidin (2017) analyzed how family influencers predominantly utilized anchor and filler material. The former is described as content which is related to what the influencers are known for, whilst the latter is related to secondary content and is used to complement and maintain the stay of their output by giving followers a glimpse of their everyday lives. The filler material is intentionally constructed to be related to the aesthetic of an amateur by being unfiltered, raw, intimate and spontaneous. The conceptualization of anchor and filler material is linked to Goffman's concepts of frontstage and backstage. Abidin (2017) identifies the anchor material content as the frontstage as this content reflects the performer's social status and manner. As for the backstage, Abidin (2017) shows how influencers invite their followers into a staged backstage, which is purposefully managed to appear raw, spontaneous and natural through filler content such as: depicting everyday routines, behind the scenes and pre-determined mistakes. This is done in order to construct an image of relatability and authenticity to their audience (Abidin, 2017). According to Goffman (1959), the backstage is per definition a private arena. However, Abidin (2017) shows how in our contemporary digital landscape, impression management has been fundamentally altered through social media. In this sense, the backstage is part of the frontstage construction as it is no longer a private arena (Abidin, 2017, Shulman, 2022). Moreover, influencers intentionally calibrate their level of amateurism through strategic selection depending on the given context. The calibration of different levels of amateurism is concretized by Abidin (2017) through demonstrating how influencers will vary with their technical selection such as professional video equipment, old handicams or smartphones.

3.1.4 Synthesis of Calibrated Amateurism

To summarize, the intersection of Goffman (1956), Dijck, Poell, Waal, (2018) and Abidin (2017) establishes an integrated analytical framework for investigating how contemporary political legitimacy is performed online. Utilizing the conceptualization of the development of the platform society, Dijck, Poell, Waal, (2018), presents how an attention economy algorithmically incentivizes emotionally engaging content over institutional expertise (Dijck, Poell, Waal, 2018). Consequently, this perspective shows how Goffman's impression management operationalizes in a new environment, through the mechanics of calibrated amateurism. In order to successfully navigate in the digital arena, actors are compelled to transform their impression management to a calibrated performance of authenticity (Goffman, 1956, Dijck, Poell, Waal, 2018, Abidin, 2017).

3.2 Framing Theory

In order to understand how communication shapes interpretations of political institutions, this thesis employed framing theory. Entman (1993) conceptualizes framing as involving processes of selection and salience, whereby certain dimensions of a perceived reality either get highlighted or downplayed. More specifically, framing theory explains how communicators selectively emphasize certain aspects of reality while omitting others, thereby promoting particular problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and suggested solutions (Entman, 1993). Frames therefore shape how political reality is understood, interpreted, and evaluated. Framing is fundamentally connected to the concept of communicative power, since it influences what becomes visible, meaningful, and legitimate in public discourse (Entman,1993). By emphasizing certain components while excluding others, communicators gain influence over how audiences perceive political actors and institutions. In this sense, frames do not merely reflect reality, they directly construct it.

This perspective becomes particularly relevant in the contemporary digital media landscapes, where framing processes are no longer controlled solely by journalists, editors, or political elites. As Abidin (2017) argues, digital creators and influencer figures increasingly participate in framing political reality and meaning-making processes, at times competing with or challenging these narratives. Consequently, framing has evolved from being primarily a mechanism of interpretation into a site of comtestation, where different and somewhat contradictory representations of institutions coexist and interact. Through their visibility, audience reach, and perceived authenticity, digital creators can therefore influence how the public perceive and evaluate political institutions. Moreover, previous research by Englund (2025) highlights that mediated communicative narratives and personal storytelling play a vital role in the construction of identity and meaning-making process, thereby shaping public perceptions and interpretation of institutions. This perspective further reinforces the modern form of digital political communication, where personal experiences, emotional engagement, and self-presentation gradually become fundamental elements to foster authenticity and legitimacy online.

Traditionally, framing theory was strongly associated with journalism and mass media, where institutional actors largely determine how political issues are communicated. However, technological developments and the rise of social media platforms have transformed this communicative landscape (Güran & Özarslan, 2022). Contemporary digital platforms enable influencers, content creators, and ordinary users to participate in political

meaning-making processes. Güran and Özarslan (2022) demonstrate that framing in digital environments increasingly adopts characteristics of personal and emotional branding, visual storytelling, and audience interaction. As a result, meaning is no longer constructed primarily through textual emphasis, but through the combination of editing, aesthetics, tone, music, humor, and engagement practices. Furthermore, social media environments facilitate the rapid circulation and contestation of frames, creating a new environment where multiple interpretations of political reality co-exist (Güran & Özarslan, 2022). This development poses challenges to the more centralized understanding of framing theory presented in previous research, while simultaneously highlighting the significant role of media platforms in shaping how frames are constructed and received.

At the same time, framing processes have increasingly adapted to platform culture and platform logics. Social media platforms encourage communicative styles centered around visibility, emotional engagement, and relatability, rather than formal or bureaucratic, or highly institutional forms of communication (Van Dijick, Poell, & de Waal, 2018; Poell, Nieborg, & Van Dijck, 2019). Within these communication landscapes, personal stories and emotionally resonant content often attain greater visibility and audience engagement than traditional political communication. This development introduces a new political dynamic, in which political actors increasingly adapt their communication to platform-specific expectations by incorporating personality, authenticity, informality, and audience interaction into their public performances. Against this background, institutional politics becomes increasingly mediated through personalized and emotionally driven forms of communication.

This transformation has also decentralized communicative power (Van Dijick, Poell, & de Waal, 2018; Poell, Nieborg, & Van Dijck, 2019). The shaping of political reality is no longer exclusively exercised by institutional actors; instead, digital creators together contribute to the representation, interpretation, and evaluation of political institutions. Hence, political communication has shifted from formal and institution-entered discourse toward more personalized, visually engaging, and emotionally oriented communication practices. Such developments illustrate how framing processes are increasingly embedded within the logic of digital platforms, where communicative success depends not only on the information value itself, but also on engagement and visibility.

Within this study, framing theory enables an analysis of how Fidias communicatively constructs representations of the EP through his Instagram content. His communications selectively highlight certain aspects of the institution while excluding other perspectives. Confusion, accessibility, emotional experiences, and everyday interactions are foregrounded,

while bureaucratic expertise and formal legislative complexity become significantly less visible. On one hand, repeated expression of confusion and simplification risks constructing the Parliament as chaotic, inaccessible, and difficult to navigate.

Framing theory is therefore particularly relevant for understanding how meaning was constructed through Fidias's communication. The framework guides the analysis not only of what is emphasized, but also of what is omitted. Importantly, framing operates as a multimodal process, constructed through the interplay of verbal expressions, visual aesthetics, emotional performances, editing techniques, and audience engagement. together with emotional expressions and audience interaction. Different frames of the EP emerge through the combined effect of these communicative elements rather than through textual materials itself. By applying a multimodal understanding of framing, the study further expands contemporary research emphasizing that digital political communication operates across multiple semiotic resources and platform-specific communicative logics.

3.2.1 Synthesis of Framing

Ultimately, this theoretical framework clarifies how platform logics, self-presenation, and framing process together construct contemporary political communication. Through the lens of framing, the current paper seeks to investigate how content creators actively influence the public understanding and legitimacy of the institutions they represent, at times creating their own political personas.

3.3 Integrating Calibrated Amateurism and Framing Theory

In this study, framing theory and calibrated amateurism were applied as complementary perspectives to examine how political communication is strategically constructed in the digital landscape. Calibrated amateurism explains how Fidias performs authenticity, relatability and non-expertise through amateur aesthetics, while framing captures how these performances shape representations of the European Parliament (Abidin, 2017; Entman, 1993). Together, these theories enable an analysis of both how Fidias establishes his political identity and how platform-driven performances of authenticity shape his audience's perception and the perceived legitimacy of the EP, in his digital communication.

4. Method

This section presents the methodical framework and research design utilized to investigate Fidias's online political communication. Firstly, it outlines the study's scientific approach and case selection. Following this, a detailed explanation of empirical material and sampling strategy is presented. Finally, the chapter concludes the analytical procedures, use of qualitative content analysis, methodological, ethical and technical considerations.

4.1 Scientific Approach

This study adopted a qualitative, social constructivist approach to examine Fidias's Instagram communication about the EP. Regarding epistemology, meaning and reality were understood as socially produced and shaped through communication (Rose, 2016). Hence, the findings represent an interpretive product rather than an objective reality (Flick, 2024). Moreover, the study followed an abductive approach, where empirical observations and theoretical frameworks of calibrated amateurism and framing theory continuously complemented one another throughout the analytical process (Kennedy & Thornberg, 2018).

4.2 Case Study & Selection

The study was designed as a qualitative case study, an approach relevant for achieving in-depth understanding of complex contemporary communicative practices (Yin, 2014). The aim was not to achieve statistical generalizability, but rather to enrich nuanced understanding of how calibrated amateurism and framing operated in a specific political communication context.

Fidias Panayiotou (@fidias0) was selected as a critical case due to his transition from social media influencer to MEP, despite lacking political experience or party affiliation. His communication presented a textbook example of an influencer politician (Starita & Trillò, 2021). Moreover, Fidias represents an extreme case of an influencer stating his debut in institutional politics, making the case significantly relevant for examining broader transformation in digital political communication. By studying such an extreme case, the analysis provides nuanced insights into how influencer culture, platform logics, and performances of non-expertise may shape the future of political communication in general.

The analytical focus was directed towards Instagram due to its emphasis on visual, informal, and engagement-driven communication, which aligned closely with the concept of

calibrated amateurism (Abidin, 2017). Furthermore, the platform's vlog-style affordances enabled a structural analysis of multimodal communicative and framing practices.

4.3 Empirical Material & Sampling Strategy

The empirical material consisted of 20 Instagram reels published on @fidias0 between 20th June 2024 to 1st February 2025, as this period captured Fidias's institutional entry into the EP. To manage the scope, the material was selected through purposive sampling, ensuring the most information-rich content particularly relevant to the research aim and questions (Yin, 2014). More specifically, the sample followed a chronological order for when Fidias was initially elected in the EP (June-August, 2024) and started a vlog-styled content format, documenting his political journey on Instagram. Consequently, posts unrelated to this format were excluded.

Each Instagram reel was treated as the primary unit of analysis. Within each reel, meaning units were identified through verbal expressions, visual aesthetics, editing technique, body language, audio and sound effects. Since these materials were analyzed multimodally, they were examined in the interplay between both verbal and nonverbal elements (Rose, 2016).

During the coding process, recurring patterns related to humor, amateur aesthetics, non-expertise, and institutional framing seem to reappear frequently across the dataset. Around reels 15-16, the analysis tends to present the same codes and thematic structures, while the coding of the remaining reels barely generates any new codes or analytical categories which further can enrich the discussion. In this regard, the final sample of 20 Instagram reels was determined analytically based on thematic saturation, rather than predefined numerical targets. It means that data collection continues until the categories and themes, in an elaborate way, are able to explain both similarities and variations within the material (Bouncken, Czakon, Schmitt, 2026).

4.4 Analytical Procedure

To operationalize the qualitative framework, a multimodal content analysis was used to examine how meaning was constructed across verbal, visual, and interactive dimensions of communication (Rose, 2016). This framework allowed for a systematic categorization of the research material, aligned with the research questions (Schreier, 2012). The analysis prioritized latent over manifest content to achieve an in depth interpretation and uncover

implicit communicative strategies within the material. The analysis began with a review of Fidias's Instagram reels to achieve an overall sense of calibrated amateurism and framing practices across his content, focusing on recurring themes, communicative patterns and indicators. Following this, the material was coded according to verbal, visual and interactive elements, and the coding framework was established abductively through consistently reviewing the material. To ensure consistency, a clear definition of each code was established (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). Furthermore, the material was coded according to verbal, visual, and interactive elements (Rose, 2016).

As a result, elements such as stylized aesthetics, performance of non-expertise, humour and audience interaction were analyzed as strategic resources used to build legitimacy. Once the coding frame was finalized, the structural analysis focused on themes related to calibrated amateurism (Theme 1) and framing of the European Parliament (Theme 2). The following examinations of codes supporting each category outlines this procedure.

Theme 1 *Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona*	
Category: Anchor (Front-stage)	Category: Filler (Back-stage + Performed back-stage)
Codes Front-stage environment, Professional practices, Professional indicators	**Codes** Performed non-expertise, Informal Characterization, Amateur aesthetics, Back stage environment, Parasocial relation (Interactive features & interactive language).

Theme 2 *Framing the European Parliament*		
Category: The EP as complex & confusing	Category: The EP as distant & elitist	Category: The EP as accessible & relatable
Codes Highlight complexity, Simplification.	**Codes** Institutional distance.	**Codes** Making the EP "understandable".

For a richer illustration of qualitative content analysis-templates and coding frames, see Appendix II, III, IV and V.

4.5 Methodological & Ethical Reflection

Given the analysis focused on a specific case study, the findings were not intended to achieve statistical generalizability. Instead, the study aimed to provide nuanced insights into emerging forms of digital political communication. While this scope constrains the study's transferability, the use of an abductive multimodal content analysis helped achieve the analytical depth and credibility of the findings (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). The interpretive nature of qualitative analysis requires a high degree of researcher reflexivity, as subjective and cultural biases can influence the analytical process (Ekström & Larsson, 2010). In this study, reflexivity played a vital role since the analysis required researchers to actively construct and interpret meaning in communication. In relation to this, to ensure transparency, it is worth noting that the research team may be influenced by preconceived notions related to our different backgrounds as the two members are from Europe and Asia, which could influence the findings (Ekström & Larsson, 2010).

Lastly, maintaining the roles of complete observers with no personal agenda in regards to Fidias or the EP ensured that the interpretations remained strictly grounded in the empirical material and theoretical framework (Boyle & Schmierbach, 2020). From an ethical perspective, this study was conducted without explicit permission from Fidias or the EP. However, the analyzed material was collected from a public social media account with unrestricted access and Fidias is a public figure. Thus, it is considered public communication and available for research purposes.

5. Analysis

In this section, we present the key findings from the analysis of Fidias's Instagram posts. We provide elaborations and examples of the interrelation regarding calibrated amateurism and framing in his communication practices. The analysis is presented through a thematic categorization in which each subsection focuses on a specific aspect of the results combined with theoretical framework and previous research. The first section focuses on the construction of calibrated amateurism, while the second section centers around the framing of the EP.

5.1 Overview of Coding Results

Before examining the thematic patterns in detail, Table 5.1 provides an overview of the frequency with which analytical codes were identified across 20 Instagram Reels included in the dataset, organized from highest to lowest frequency. The table outlines the recurrence of the communicative strategies presented in the analysis and offers an initial indication of broader patterns in Fidia's representation of both himself and the European Parliament.

Code words	**Theme / Category Alignment**	**Explanation**	**Findings: Number of posts matching the codes (out of 20)**	**Percentage of Sample**
Informal characterization	Theme 1: Filler (Back-stage)	Fidias speaks casually to the camera while wearing informal clothing inside the EP.	20	100%
Amateur aesthetics	Theme 1: Filler (Back-stage)	Fidias positions himself through raw and "performatively" unfiltered content production.	20	100%
Institutional distance	Theme 2: Framing the European Parliament (The EP as distant & elitist)	Politicians and parliamentary structures are portrayed as exclusive and distant from ordinary citizens.	19	95%

Professional indicator	Theme 1: Anchor (Front-stage)	Fidias emphasizes his political identity through visible markers of political responsibility.	18	90%
Front-stage environment	Theme 1: Anchor (Front-stage)	Fidias is in parliamentary environments such as the chamber. Formal institutional settings characterized by professionalism, authority, and political practices within the European Parliament, such as the chamber.	17	85%
Highlight complexity	Theme 2: Framing the European Parliament (The EP as complex & confusing)	Fidias emphasizes how parliamentary procedures are complicated and difficult to comprehend.	17	85%
Parasocial relation: Interactive features & Interactive language	Theme 1: Filler (Back-stage)	Fidias directly addresses online audiences using expressions such as “you guys” and encourages interaction through platform features.	16	80%
Performed non-expertise	Theme 1: Filler (Back-stage)	Fidias expresses confusion through statements such as “I may miss something; “I am shocked”, hesitations, and self-deprecating remarks about his own competence.	15	75%
Simplification	Theme 2: Framing the European Parliament (The EP as complex & confusing)	Fidias attempts to explain parliamentary procedures through simplified narratives with easily understandable terms.	14	70%

Back-stage environment	Theme 1: Filler (Back-stage)	Fidias films in corridors, staircases, and outside parliamentary spaces, in contrast to the front-stage environment.	9	45%
Making the EP "understandable"	Theme 2: Framing the European Parliament (The EP as accessible & relatable)	Fidias explains parliamentary activities using relatable language and visual aids.	9	45%
Professional practice	Theme 1: Anchor (Front-stage)	Fidias documents in detail his performances of institutional duties.	8	40%

Table 5.1: Post Frequencies per Code (N=20)

5.2 Visual Performance of Amateurism - Constructing the Relatable Amateur

5.2.1 Technical Performance of Amateurism

In our analysis, we focused on how calibrated amateurism and framing theory integrated with dimensions of multimodality including speech, texts, audio, technical configurations and visual cues as well as different communication tones such as informality, formality, humorous, etc. In Appendix II, we outline our coding process, where each layer of multimodality was systematically categorized to identify patterns and recurring themes.

To exemplify, we present Figure 1 where Fidias posted an Instagram video on the 26 of June, year 2024, with the caption: "*How the EP makes decisions*". In this video, Fidias explains the complexities of parliamentary decision making through statements such as: "I will try to teach you how the EP makes decisions". As he begins to explain to his camera, he accidentally drops his phone and picks it up only to leave it at ground level to further record the rest of his video. This seemingly accidental phone drop is analyzed as his stylistic choice to include this "accident" in his video, presenting a textbook example of calibrated amateurism (Abidin, 2017). By deliberately choosing to include such an accident, Fidias presents a clear example of what Abidin (2017) describes as the staged backstage where the informal, raw and unedited feeling of the behind the scenes of his political persona is staged (Abidin, 2017). Through a perspective of multimodality, we can identify the shift from an

eyelevel view to a floor level angle, combined with simplified explanations of complex parliamentary procedures as attempting to neutralize the institutional formality, which traditionally characterizes political institutions (Item 2, Appendix I). This phenomenon becomes significantly apparent throughout the findings, in which dimensions of back-stage and performed back-stage are identified.

In (Item 9, Appendix I) we identify how he is being filmed in a formal setting, speaking during an official session and concludes his speech by doing a hand gesture resembling a heart and saying "I love you all", which is something he usually ends his Instagram videos with. This is highly contrasting in comparison to how he presents the "boring and monotone" (Item 3, Appendix I) communication of the EP. To illustrate this, he titles his video "*Why The E.U Is Boring*" and uses a very slow and static clip showcasing work in the parliament.(Figure 2). He contrasts this with himself stating :"I want to improve the institution's communication to be more fun and understandable." while incorporating animations, humorous audio effects, background music, fast-paced editing, and visual hooks (Figure 3 & 4). This further reveals a significant paradox in the tension between the contents message and its technical execution. By including various editing alternatives, Fidias demonstrates knowledge of technical expertise. This implies that amateurism is not a lack of skill, but a calibrated performance to look raw and unedited. Following this logic, Fidias constructs his amateurism in contrast to the formality of other politicians and the EP, suggesting that such performance is in fact a highly produced aesthetic choice and functions as an alternative to institutional professionalism.

Furthermore, we identified the editing style to be characterized by fast cuts and zooms, animated elements with audio effects. This illustrates the effects of mediatisation in digital political communication and consequently how candidates in an attention economy must compete for attention alongside entertainment content (Abidin, 2017). This becomes more apparent when examining the use of vertical videos and a vlog aesthetic, which is derived from platform logics and influencer culture, inside the formal corridors and halls of the Parliament. Our results show that Fidias utilizes the affordances of Instagram and platform logics to merge his frontstage institutional role with his backstage amateur persona to create a form of institutional distance.

Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

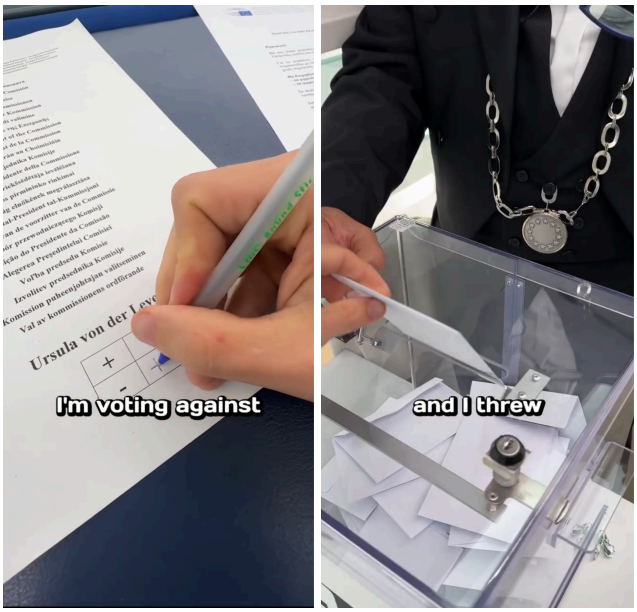


Figure 6



5.2.2 Aesthetic Dissonance

Since Fidias frequently includes informal behavior such as “dabbing” throughout his communication practices, the findings indicate that Fidias was opposing the physical political etiquette (Figure 1). In another instance of him explaining the EU's budget, (Figure 6), the reel is filmed through a selfie point of view and ends with a “blooper”, in which he directs the camera close to his face and points out his tongue whilst making a funny face. These examples illustrate how Fidias deliberately distinguishes himself from institutional formalities and maintains his outsider persona. Instances such as playing with the professional artifacts, laying on the floor of the EP and dancing towards the camera collectively signal that he is not disciplined by the institutional formalities. Consistent to this line of thinking, his refusion toward the professional environment within the political institution further amplifies the role as a media influencer. Although Fidias emphasizes his understanding of complex political issues and institutional processes, the continuous incorporation of bloopers, comedical performances, and influencer-style gestures simultaneously diminishes the authority and the hierarchical distance traditionally associated with politicians explaining complexities to citizens. By doing so, Fidias avoids being perceived as an elitist expert and instead reinforces his positioning as an amateur. This contributes to the duality of Fidias's personas and further illustrates a form of visual dissonance, in which he symbolically distances himself from the political elite despite operating within institutional structures.

5.2.3 Verbal Performance of Non-expertise

Another dominant pattern identified throughout the findings concerned repeated performances of non-expertise. In this context, non-expertise is expressed through statements in which Fidias explicitly emphasizes his lack of political competence, for example “I have no political experience", “I may be missing something here in this committee", and “I want to apologize in advance, I'm only 24 years old and I just got elected, perhaps sometimes I will vote for the wrong thing, may say the wrong thing or take the wrong decision.” (Item 5, Appendix I). Across the materials, such expressions occur repeatedly and are often articulated within highly professional political settings. By positioning themselves as inexperienced or uncertain, politicians may reduce expectations, avoid future critique, and protect both their legitimacy and public image (Crewe, 2025; Reveilhac and Steenbergen, 2025).

Through a multimodal perspective, these performances operate both visually and verbally in Fidias’s content. For instance, in the video “I am sorry Europe”, Fidias states;: “I

want to apologize in advance, I have no political experience in the past and I am sure I will make mistakes along the way ” (Item 5, Appendix I). Simultaneously, he performs a “dabs” gesture, inserts a red warning-flash animation when mentioning the word “mistakes”, and overlays the sequence with melancholic background music. These multimodal elements humorously dramatize and exaggerate his lack of political competence while simultaneously framing it as authentic.

The repeated use of such performances normalizes future mistakes, criticism, and limited political knowledge, positioning these shortcomings as expected and therefore more acceptable, making the audience inherently forgiving towards him. By proactively apologizing for anticipated failure, for example “sorry for my future mistakes”, Fidias constructs a form of symbolic immunity. This reinforces Compton’s (2025) discussion of inoculation theory as a crisis communication strategy, whereby anticipated criticism is neutralized in advance by self-disclosure. Consequently, Fidias can deflect criticism by repeatedly reaffirming his identity as an amateur who openly acknowledges his incompetence. Rather than undermining his political identity, the continuous performance of non-expertise and limited political knowledge becomes a strategic communicative asset through which authenticity and legitimacy are fostered.

To elaborate further, Fidias manages to distance himself from politicians in the institution through his expressions of non-expertise, as this strategy works as a populist narrative where he appears more real, relatable and honest than the other politicians. This is shown when he explicitly states that "Politicians are afraid of expressing their true self and are forced to speak in a way that nobody understands, politicians are stuck to the same boring ideas"(Item 19, Appendix I). In this distance, he positions himself as the professional mistake-maker who invites his followers to a shared learning process, in which he is a beginner learning about politics together with them. Fidias explicitly states that “The EP has failed to make us understand how it operates, how decisions are actually taken” (Item 3, Appendix I). He contrasts this with himself as the solution: “I am the newly elected member of the European Parliament and one of my goals is to make everyone understand how Europe works. Perhaps this video I make doesn't seem very serious, but I think it's the best way to communicate a message across. Let's discover fun ways to communicate politics together.”(Item 3, Appendix I).

5.2.4 Relational Performance of Audience Interaction

Moving on to our findings regarding relational performance and parasocial relations between Fidias and his audience, we conclude that Fidias focuses his content on engagement, interaction and two way communication with his followers. We identified statements like "Let me know in the comments below, what do you think?"(Item 16; Item 18; Item 19, Appendix I) in all of our analyzed material. This engagement with the audience creates a sense of an interactive community, where the audience is seen as active participants who contribute to Fidias's learning and political journey. Such relationships between influencer and follower foster a stronger sense of intimacy, trust and belonging which can replace institutional expertise, particularly if the audience is socially or politically disconnected (Bérail, Guillon, Bungener, 2019).

Building on this, we identify populist styled communication in which Fidias constructs his political persona through the collective journey into politics along with his followers. To exemplify from our analyzed data, Fidias states *"*We only have 24 hours a day, so I cannot make change in all the topics available in the EP. So I need to choose one or two topics to focus on so we can affect actual change. I want to know what you guys think I should do here in the parliament, what should be my big goal? Write in the comments and I will read them all and consider*"*. Looking at this video through multimodality, we identify that he affirms his position as "one of the people" as he dabs whilst in the EP, dances to the camera and includes loads of animations, effects and audio effects to reassure to his audience that he is still the influencer Fidias, and not a politician in a traditional sense.

In another video (Item 6, Appendix I), he shows how he votes in an official voting round, especially when he mentions "And like I promised to you, I'm voting against von der Leyen." Later in the video, he is being interviewed and states that *"*I want to make politics cool". These examples accumulate to two important aspects of his self presentation, which is the vlog-styled political journey with his audience and his hyper-transparency. Considering hyper-transparency, Fidias manages to continuously intertwine backstage content in a fronstage environment by inviting his audience to the behind the scenes of the parliament, which is illustrated through the many captions from our analyzed material: *"Who Did I Vote For President Of The European Parliament?"* (Item 6, Appendix I)*,"The European Union's Secret for Global Influence"* (Item 10, Appendix I), and *"Exposing the Secret of the European Parliament"* (Item 14, Appendix I). Through the lens of calibrated amateurism, this reflects how Fidias curates his content to appear as an amateur, who invites his audience

to the behind the scenes of the European Parliament, when in reality, he's choosing what the audience sees and what they don't, as staged backstage.

5.2.5 Amateurism as a Strategic Communicative Resource

Finally, these initial findings accumulate to what we describe as amateurism as a strategic communication resource in political communication, which captures how Fidias constructs his political persona.

Vallström & Törnberg (2025) suggests in their study that successful influence is built upon creating a collective identity rather than just spreading information, which is what we argue that Fidias amounts to. By being consistent in his political persona as a non-expert professional mistake maker, he fosters a collective identity for politically alienated individuals who feel disconnected from traditional politics (Triga & Ioannidis, 2025). Having said that, calibrated amateurism becomes a tool for mobilization as it invites the audience to identify with a politician who appears to be authentic since he mirrors their own confusion and skepticism towards the political elite. This is particularly evident across the material, for example he titled an Instagram reel as *"Europe is confusing everyone"* in which he criticizes why there are so many institutions within the EP called "councils". In the video, Fidias expresses confusion and frustration as he states *"*Europe, there are enough councils, please be more creative with your names you are fucking (beep) confusing everyone*"* (Item 17, Appendix I). Applying multimodality, we can identify that he uses audio effects to increase the drama and negative emotions, he's laying on the floor of the institution which signifies that he's giving up or is terribly frustrated and uses extreme close-ups to express his frustration.

Across our findings, we emphasize the gap between his role as an elected politician and his influencer persona. By navigating the tension between frontstage and backstage, outsider and insider, Fidias manages to create an unique strategic position where he can address his audience as their equal, while simultaneously occupying a seat of institutional power. This further illustrates how he manages to shift political responsibility from himself towards either his audience or the complexities of the system itself. Ultimately, this hybridity represents a discrepancy between the outsider persona and the institutional decisionmaker.

Figure 7 “Europe is confusing everyone”



Figure 8



5.3 Framing the European Parliament

Following the previous section, this segment addresses how Fidias frames the EP through his digital communication.

5.3.1 The European Parliament as Complex, Distant & Difficult to Navigate

A dominating pattern throughout our empirical material is the consistent framing of the EP as complex, distant, difficult to navigate and, at times, an overwhelming institutional environment. This frame is constructed by recurring expressions of confusion, uncertainty, and non-expertise, reinforced by visual cues. This is exemplified by statements like: “I am shocked” (Item 19, Appendix I); “The EP has failed to make us understand how it operates” (Item 3, Appendix I), and “Maybe I’m missing something in this committee" (Item 9, Appendix I). In his video *“Europe is confusing everyone”* he frames the EP as structurally absurd and overwhelming through expressing frustration and criticizing the EP by stating

“Please be more creative with your names, you are fucking (beep) confusing everyone” (Item 17, Appendix I). This constructs an image of the EP as overly bureaucratic, irrational and impossible to understand. This framing is further enhanced through multimodal elements as Fidias is laying on the floor with his hands on his head expressing extreme frustration, dramatic audio effects and animations are used to increase the effects of everything being upside down (Figure 7). As a result, he represents political complexity through embodied frustration. This presents a paradox in which Fidias frames the EP as overly complex while attempting to reduce the complexity with humouristic sketches and amateur aesthetics.

Another explicit example is how he consistently wears his official EP-badge around his neck like he is visiting the parliament, as this frames the institution as distant (Figure 8). Related to this, our material shows this confusion by statements like “I need to find my seat” while looking lost and filming his point of view (Item 6, Appendix I). As a result, he frames the institution as complex and difficult to navigate through his physical navigation struggles. Moreover, our results indicate that framing barely emerges from direct political argumentation, instead he translates structural complexity into personal storytelling. By consistently documenting his own struggle as a newly elected member, institutional complexity is represented through his personal experience.

5.3.2 The European Parliament as Accessible & Relatable

Alongside the framing of complexity, another pattern observed refers to accessibility and relatability. Through vlog-style communication, Fidias reduces the symbolic distance between political institutions and online audiences by bringing the audience into spaces that have been traditionally inaccessible to the public. By filming himself casually interacting with parliamentary environments like walking through corridors or entering official chambers, the EP is transformed from a formal institution into a visible, familiar, and navigable space. This sense of accessibility is enhanced by informal language, technical amateur aesthetics, and audience engagement. The audience is invited to accompany Fidias throughout his political journey rather than passively observing institutional politics from a distance. This type of interaction fosters a sense of inclusion and parasocial intimacy.

Furthermore, a consistent simplification of political complexities is identified by Fidas’s basic explanations on parliamentary procedures with informal, easily understandable narratives along with audiovisual cues to guide the audience. This simplification reflects the broader platform logics where superficiality and engagement earn predominance over depth and nuance through algorithmic selection (Dijck, Poell, Waal, 2018). Although the EP

appears to be more approachable, political processes risk being reduced to entertainment-oriented content, since its complexity and significance are gradually obscured.

5.3.3 The European Parliament as an Experiential & Personalized Space

Our empirical material shows that Fidias frames the EP as an experiential and personalized environment. Rather than presenting the institution through institutional explanations or formal political discourses, he constantly blends personal experiences, emotionality, and narrative storytelling in his presentation of the EP. This framing appears particularly visible in contents following vlog format and structures, where videos frequently feature themes such as “first day” and “follow me”. In this sense, he transforms institutional politics into a personal journey centered around exploration, development and emotional engagement. This shifts the focus from institutional framework to personal stories, as Fidias selects his personal experience as the primary interpretative lens through which audiences encounter the EP. As a result, the institution becomes accessible through subjective mediation instead of institutional communication.

In addition, by utilizing vlog-aesthetics like selfie point of view, shaky camera movement, walking shots and directly addressing his viewers, the audience experiences the EP through Fidias rather than though the institution itself. Consequently, his personal journey functions as the dominant interpretive framework.

5.4 Synthesis of Findings

Across the findings, Fidias's communication is constructed through the strategic use of calibrated amateurism and framing of the EP. The first part of the analysis illustrates how a political amateur persona is constructed through multimodal resources, such vlog-aesthetics, non-expertise, informalities, and audience interaction. The second section of the analysis extends this finding by examining how these strategic communicative resources are used to frame the representation of the EP within Fidias’s digital communication.

Our analysis demonstrates that by consistently and deliberately constructing an amateur persona, Fidas operationalizes this as a strategic communicative resource for gaining political legitimacy. Furthermore, these strategies contribute to the framing of the EP as: complex, distant and difficult to navigate while simultaneously accessible and relatable. In addition, the EP is also framed as an experiential and personalized space.

Taken together, these frames collectively construct different representations of the EP, blending complexity, accessibility, and personalization. Instead of producing a coherent or unified institutional representation, Fidias's communication generates a layered and sometimes contradictory image of the Parliament. Such development underscores the central role of Fidias as mediator between institutional politics and platform culture, where he transforms the institution's complexities into a social media narrative shaped by platform logics which resonates with online audiences.

6. Discussion & Conclusion

In this section, we present our conclusion and discussion, our main contribution to the current state of research as well as our suggestions for future research.

6.1 Addressing The Research Questions

Regarding our first research question, we found that Fidias constructs an amateur political persona through Abidin's (2017) conceptualization of calibrated amateurism. By analyzing multimodal performances of non-expertise, authenticity and intimacy, Fidias's communication strategically presents a sense of rawness and spontaneity while utilizing behind the scenes aesthetics, visual imperfections, mistakes, informal language and vlog-styled communication. Our findings illustrate, in line with calibrated amateurism, how authenticity in political communication is performed through imperfection and relatability. Furthermore, our analysis shows how calibrated amateurism operates within a political context by examining how Fidias strategically performs technical and intellectual amateurism while still maintaining his political persona. In this regard, amateurism functions as a strategic communicative resource in which professionalism and institutional expertise is deliberately replaced by perceived personal authenticity, emotional accessibility and intimacy. Consequently, our findings suggest that political legitimacy through digital communication is negotiated through relatability and identification rather than institutional expertise and authority.

As for our second research question, we found that Fidias use of calibrated amateurism actively re-negotiates how the institutional legitimacy of the EP is communicated and perceived within the landscape of Fidias's Instagram communication. By framing the parliament through influencer logic and personalized storytelling, the institution becomes filtered through Fidias's individual perspective rather than the institutional discourse, which transforms the EP to a personalized space for his audience to experience with him. Our findings show that he actively contrasts the institution as complex and distant while simultaneously framing their processes as simple and relatable through vlog-styled communication and simplified explanations. Through this process, institutional authority becomes dependent on the influencers ability to translate politics into platform logics that resonate aesthetically and emotionally with digital audiences. As a result, institutional professionalism and expertise is being replaced by visibility, relatability and parasocial trust. In this dynamic, Fidias put himself as a mediator between platform culture and institutional

politics, where his personal authenticity functions as an alternative source of political legitimacy.

6.2 Theoretical Implications & Contributions

In regards to previous research, we contextualize Fidias as the "professional mistake-maker" as presented by Triga & Ioannidis (2025) through delving deeper into the communicative strategies and multimodal resources behind the performance of non-expertise. While previous research highlights influencer logics, personalization and personal authenticity in digital political communication, our study illustrates how these dynamics are strategically produced through multimodal performances of amateurism, audience interaction and non-expertise. Moreover, we show that the dynamics does not emerge as spontaneous expressions, but as strategic communicative strategies in which political actors construct legitimacy, relatability and emotional proximity with audiences.

By consistently and deliberately positioning himself as being inexperienced, likely to make mistakes and confused, Fidias transforms non-expertise from a political weakness into a strategic communicative strength that lowers institutional distance and inoculates him against future critique. Consequently, our results pose a dilemma regarding accountability for politicians since the strategic performance of non-expertise creates an environment where politicians are allowed to make mistakes and lower expectations of political competence through performances of amateurism and relatability. Under these conditions, accountability risks becoming increasingly de-attached from institutional responsibility as audiences may evaluate politicians by their perceived transparency, honesty and emotional intimacy rather than political competence or decision making capacity. As a result, as non-expertise becomes integrated into a politicians persona, mistakes no longer function as failures that undermine legitimacy. Instead, mistakes and failures are expected and even utilized as strategies to gain political legitimacy within digital communication.

Building on our findings, our study shed light on a broader transformation in how political legitimacy is constructed within digital communication environments through influencer aesthetics and platform logics. By utilizing vlog-style storytelling, perceived intimacy and multimodal performances of amateurism, Fidias represents the EP as a personalized, platform mediated experience through a shared political journey. By doing this, our result suggests that he shifts the institutional legitimacy from institution, to his digital representation, making audiences not merely receivers of political communication, but active

participants in validating and reinforcing political authenticity. In doing this, he shifts institutional authenticity values from expertise and professionalism towards relatability and performative authenticity. Under these conditions, his digital audience is exposed to institutional discourse through Fidias's staged backstage and subjective interpretation of the institution. Consequently, our study suggests that platform logics not only influence how political actors communicate, but also reshape how political institutions are represented, interpreted and experienced within digital media environments. By inviting his audience to a shared political journey, our results show that institutional politics becomes increasingly narrativized and emotionally mediated. This echoes previous studies within the field, who argue that mediatisation of politics results in a shift from institutional logic towards a paradigm of platform logic.

6.3 Broader Implications for Strategic Communication

Extending beyond the case of Fidias, we identify implications for how political participation is practiced. By constantly inviting his followers into a shared political journey through interactive comments, behind the scenes access and vlog-style storytelling, our results reflect the tension identified by Schmuck et,. al (2022) where political participation driven by emotional engagement and simplification of politics is a double edged sword. On one side, such strategies can potentially increase political engagement and make politics more comprehensive for politically alienated audiences. On the other hand, it risks oversimplifying political complexities which could increase cynicism towards politicians and political institutions (Schmuck et al., 2022).

Having said that, this raises concerns for strategic political communication regarding democratic governance, particularly when lobbyists, corporations, or other influential digital actors possess massive communicative reach and persuasive capacity than official political institutions. Consequently, the communicative process may become fully controlled by actors capable of dominating platform attention economies, potentially weakening the value of democratic structures. The broader implications of our results concludes an increasing blurring of the boundaries between politics, entertainment and personal branding, in which influencer-styled communications like calibrated amateurism may be an increasingly popular model for political actors to gain legitimacy through strategic communication.

6.4 Limitations & Future Research

We encourage future research to measure the long term effects of our results to identify broader implications of negotiated institutional legitimacy. Furthermore, a nethnographic study which highlights the audience's perspective would be an interesting complement to identify common themes and patterns. Lastly, we propose future research to identify similar influencer politicians to measure the similarities or differences in their communicative strategies.

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8. Appendices

Appendix I

The coding process demonstrates thematic overlap between calibrated amateurism and framing practices, since they frequently interconnect and mutually complement one another within the same sequences. The appendices therefore exemplify multimodal coding, further presenting how performances of non-expertise contribute to the framing of the European parliament.

Examples of Multimodal Coding and Thematic Overlap

Following items are retrieved from Fidias's Instagram Reels between 20th June 2024 to 1st February 2025

Item 1:

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">First Day In The European Parliament
Posted 20th June 2024
https://www.instagram.com/reel/C8cDsg6Op2r/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==
"This is my first day as a politician in the European Parliament…It's weird that they don't believe me."</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Visual sequence: Fast-paced montage documenting emotional reactions inside the Parliament.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Analytical dimension</td><td>Coding</td></tr>
<tr><td>Theme</td><td>Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona
Framing the European Parliament</td></tr>
<tr><td>Categories</td><td>Anchor; Filler; The EP as complex & confusing; The EP as accessible & relatable</td></tr>
<tr><td>Code/s</td><td>Performed non-expertise.
Parasocial relations.
Informal characterization.
Amateur aesthetics.
Back-stage environment.
Front-stage environment.
Highlight complexity.
Institutional distance.
Professional indicator.
Making the EP understandable.
Simplification.</td></tr>
</table>

Multimodal indicators	Selfie-style POV footage, shaky handled camera movements, and panning shots across the European parliament communicate an informal and immersive vlog aesthetic. Casual attire (hoodie) conveys a sense of relatability and the impression of being an ordinary visitor rather than a professional politician. Alternating selfie and reverse POV shots, combined with the use of a 360-degree camera and animated clock graphics, background music and jump-cuts creating a dynamic, spontaneous, and experience-oriented presentation.

Item 2:

Introducing European Political Groups **Posted 21st June 2024** https://www.instagram.com/reel/C8e9H9puzFd/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA== "I need to decide which party group I will join… It's very difficult, I need to make a wise choice.**"**	
Visual sequence: Fidias in casual attire moving energetically toward the camera while pointing, together with his editing, create a playful and visually engaging communication.	
Analytical dimension	Coding
Theme	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona Framing the European Parliament
Categories	Anchor; Filler; The EP as complex & confusing; The EP as accessible & relatable
Code/s	Performed non-expertise. Informal characterization. Parasocial relations. Amateur aesthetics. Back-stage environment. Front-stage environment. Highlight complexity. Professional indicator. Institutional distance. Simplification. Making the EP understandable.
Multimodal indicators	Casual clothing contributes to an informal and approachable presentation style. Animated logos, zoom-in effects, and synchronized sound effects contribute to strengthen the key

	messages and maintain engagement with the audiences. Fidias performs exaggerated body language such as running toward the camera to "pick it up", pointing directly at the viewer, and using expressive hand gestures to create the playful and dynamic mode of communication.

Item 3:

Why The E.U Is Boring **Posted 24th June 2024** https://www.instagram.com/reel/C8mroT8KFpq/?igsh=MWZ1MWJqOG40MGE3ZQ== "The EP has failed to make us understand how it operates…The leaders of the EP speak in such an attractive robotic way that nobody wants to listen to them**."**	
Visual sequence:	
Analytical dimension	Coding
Theme	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona Framing the European Parliament
Categories	Anchor; Filler; The EP as complex & confusing; The EP as distant & elitist; The EP as accessible & relatable
Code/s	Performed non-expertise. Parasocial relations. Informal characterization. Amateur aesthetics. Back-stage environment. Front-stage environment. Institutional distance. Highlight complexity. Professional indicator. Making the EP understandable. Simplification.
Multimodal indicators	Casual clothing, animated visual elements, and POV-style filming construct an informal and entertainment-oriented aesthetic. Clips of Fidias jumping around on a staircase while emphasizing "fun ways to communicate" contribute to the playfulness and emotional engagement. Fast-paced editing, zoom-ins and zoom outs, dramatic sound effects,and visual hooks communicate a dynamic and attention-driven presentation. His direct body language toward the camera conveys a strong impression of conversational intimacy, while the visible parliamentary badge worn around his neck positions him as a visitor-like individual navigating the institution.

Item 4:

How the EU makes Decisions **Posted 26th June 2024** https://www.instagram.com/reel/C8saba_yMrR/?igsh=OGpncmtuMXgxcHUz "I will try to teach you how the EP makes decisions…Sorry my phone fell…**"**	
Visual sequence: Fidias is at an airport where he stages a phone drop, explains parliamentary procedures with animated infographics and sound-enhanced editing.	
Analytical dimension	Coding
Theme	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona Framing the European Parliament
Categories	Filler; The EP as complex & confusing; The EP as accessible & relatable
Code/s	Performed non-expertise. Parasocial relations. Informal characterization. Amateur aesthetics. Back-stage environment. Highlight complexity. Making the EP understandable. Simplification.
Multimodal indicators	Casual attire and airport setting communicate an everyday context. Fidias intentionally includes a staged moment of dropping his phone, reinforcing how authenticity can be performatively constructed. Animated infographics, background music, and sound effects are used to emphasize explanation of processes and guide viewer interpretation. The video features abrupt angle changes and editing to create visual hooks and maintain engagement. The reel ends with a performative dab gesture directed at the camera. This gesture is highly popular among the younger demographics.

Item 5:

I'm Sorry Europe **Posted 9th July 2024** https://www.instagram.com/reel/C9M-5GEtlQI/?igsh=dTh1cmM1NHdrczlr

"I have no experience in the past and I'm sure I will make mistakes along the way…But I want you to know that my intentions will always be to make this world the best place."	
Visual sequence: Selfie POV shots of Fidias moving around the room while speaking directly into a microphone to convey an emotional message.	
Analytical dimension	Coding
Theme	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona Framing the European Parliament
Categories	Anchor; Filler; The EP as distant & elitist
Code/s	Performed non-expertise. Parasocial relations. Informal characterization. Amateur aesthetics. Front-stage environment. Institutional distance. Professional indicator.
Multimodal indicators	Closed up zooms, dramatic background music, alarm sound effects, melancholic audio, selfie POV framing, continuous movement around the chamber, and direct speech into the microphone to intensify the seriousness and sincerity of the apology.

Item 6:

Who Did I Vote For President Of The European Parliament? **Posted 16th July 2024** https://www.instagram.com/reel/C9ftHQVJvxQ/?igsh=MWd1bWtzZWkycmcxdA== "Today is my first day as a member of the European Parliament and I will take you with me…I just entered the big room and I need to find my seat.…I chose not to vote for anybody because I don't think they are good enough… I want to make politics cool.**"**	
Visual sequence: Fidias in continuous selfie POV as he walks through formal parliamentary spaces repeatedly expressing confusion about his first day of work, accompanied by humorous background music.	
Analytical dimension	Coding
Theme	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona Framing the European Parliament
Categories	Anchor; Filler; The EP as complex & confusing; The EP as

	distant & elitist
Code/s	Performed non-expertise. Informal characterization. Amateur aesthetics. Front-stage environment. Highlight complexity. Professional indicator. Professional practice. Institutional distance. Simplification.
Multimodal indicators	Casual attires and continuous selfie POV frame enhance the sense of informality and personal storytelling within the formal parliamentary settings. He walks around appearing confused and repeatedly uses phrases such as "I need to find my seat" and "it's my first day of work", highlighting his non-expertise and uncertainty. Regardless of the parliamentary badge being visibly worn around his neck, his manner resembles a tourist or a visitor. Background music supports the sequence, strengthening the humorous and performative portrayal of the institutional distance.

Item 7:

Ursula von der Leyen gets re-elected **Posted 18th July 2024** https://www.instagram.com/reel/C9kHLy7p46W/?igsh=c253Yzc1cXhndGVp "And like I promised to you, I'm voting against von der Leyen…I am folding it and putting it in the envelope, and voting**."**	
Visual sequence: Fidias in selfie POV through parliamentary spaces, intercut with a YouTube clip announcing her victory, before documenting the full voting process as he casts his vote against her.	
Analytical dimension	Coding
Theme	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona Framing the European Parliament
Categories	Anchor; Filler; The EP as complex & confusing; The EP as distant & elitist
Code/s	Parasocial relations. Informal characterization. Amateur aesthetics. Front-stage environment. Highlight complexity.

	Professional indicator. Professional practice. Institutional distance. Simplification.
Multimodal indicators	Selfie POV filming and the visible parliamentary badge communicate a personalized and immersive perspective within the institutional setting. The reel inserts an external YouTube clip announcing her victory, providing contextual framing for the political event. Fidias documents the voting process in detail, filming from when he casts his vote against to puts his envelope in the box, emphasizing transparency and political participation.

Item 8:

What Members of the European Parliament Do **Posted 4th September 2024** https://www.instagram.com/reel/C_gPFULvyfn/?igsh=MXFsaGp4cWhqMndlcw== "My job is obviously not to do these videos, but my main job is legislation, we can change the laws**."**	
Visual sequence: Fidias standing inside the parliamentary voting chamber while speaking and pointing directly at the camera, together with fast-paced editing, animated graphics, and sound effects that construct a dynamic presentation.	
Analytical dimension	Coding
Theme	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona Framing the European Parliament
Categories	Anchor; Filler; The EP as complex & confusing; The EP as distant & elitist
Code/s	Informal characterization. Amateur aesthetics. Front-stage environment. Highlight complexity. Professional indicator. Professional practice. Institutional distance. Making the EP understandable. Simplification.
Multimodal indicators	Casual attire contrasts with the formal parliamentary voting chamber, creating a mix of formal and informal presentation. The reel is designed with fast-paced editing, animated logos,

	and sound effects to intensify engagement and maintain visual hooks. He points at the camera while addressing the audience in a confrontational and conversational manner.

Item 9:

Speaking for the First Time in the European Parliament **Posted 4th September 2024** https://www.instagram.com/reel/C_gcWiIBoBT/?igsh=eGY5YXp1aXZuaWw0 "This is my first time ever speaking in the European parliament…I may be missing something here in this committee."	
Visual sequence: Fidias reacts to and interrupts his own statements through fast-paced editing while directly addressing the audience and ending with a heart gesture toward the camera.	
Analytical dimension	Coding
Theme	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona Framing the European Parliament
Categories	Anchor; Filler; The EP as complex & confusing; The EP as distant & elitist
Code/s	Performed non-expertise. Parasocial relations. Informal characterization. Amateur aesthetics. Front-stage environment. Highlight complexity. Professional practice. Professional indicator. Simplification. Institutional distance.
Multimodal indicators	Casual attire contributes to an informal and approachable presentation style. The video applies layered editing in which Fidias makes a reaction video and comments on his own previous statements, creating a self-referential and humorous impression. Fast-paced cuts interrupt and reframe his speech, while "non-professional" gestures such as forming a heart symbol with his hand saying "I love you all" in the chamber contribute substantially to the emotional connection and audience engagement.

Item 10:

The European Union's Secret for Global Influence **Posted 26th September 2024** https://www.instagram.com/reel/DAYWPWyP2fw/?igsh=Z2g0dnV3c25ucWN4 "First I chose China because it seems like the country that will rule the world. Fourth, Africa … because it is my favorite country."	
Visual sequence: Vlog-style footage of Fidias inside the EP playfully handling the parliamentary gavel while addressing the camera directly (edited with animated elements, background music, sound effects, and transitions).	
Analytical dimension	Coding
Theme	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona Framing the European Parliament
Categories	Anchor; Filler; The EP as complex & confusing; The EP as accessible & relatable
Code/s	Amateur aesthetics. Performed non-expertise. Informal characterization. Back-stage environment. Front-stage environment. Professional indicator. Making the EP understandable. Simplification. Institutional distance.
Multimodal indicators	Casual attire and playful interaction with the parliamentary gavel present an informal and unserious atmosphere. Animated graphics, exaggerated sound effects, background music, and fast-paced editing enhance the entertainment-oriented presentation. The use of professional editing techniques contrasts the performance of amateurism, revealing a strategically curated form of authenticity.

Item 11:

How Safe Are Our Elections, Really? **Posted 2nd November 2024** https://www.instagram.com/reel/DB4uCRLpB6B/?igsh=MmJqZjRiNDQzNjlh "This experience got me thinking about how transparent and fair elections are for democracy."

Visual sequence: Fidias addresses the camera inside the EP while close-up shots are intercut with footage of burning ballots, infographics, and animated visual elements.	
Analytical dimension	Coding
Theme	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona Framing the European Parliament
Categories	Anchor; Filler; The EP as complex & confusing; The EP as distant & elitist
Code/s	Parasocial relations. Informal characterization. Amateur aesthetics. Front-stage environment. Highlight complexity. Professional indicator. Institutional distance.
Multimodal indicators	Voting ballots are depicted catching fire, accompanied by dramatic background music that intensifies the sense of urgency. Casual attire within the professional parliamentary setting positions him as informal and approachable, while close-up shots of him seated at the front holding a microphone strengthen direct interaction with the audience. Rapid editing, intercut with additional video clips and infographics, together with sound effects and animated visual elements emphasize key messages, while the frequent use of visual elements enables the communication of complex information and sustains the audience's attention.

Item 12:

The European Commission Disappointed me **Posted 3rd November 2024** https://www.instagram.com/reel/DB4zKwQIu8r/?igsh=MTJxZjFkeHBqYmlsdg== "The European Commission has disappointed me:"	
Visual sequence: Fidias filming himself inside the EP while presenting documents and external video clips, animated graphics and textual related to a fraud case in Cyprus.	
Analytical dimension	Coding
Theme	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona Framing the European Parliament
Categories	Anchor; Filler; The EP as complex & confusing; The EP as

	distant & elitist; The EP as accessible & relatable
Code/s	Parasocial relations. Informal characterization. Amateur aesthetics. Front-stage environment. Highlight complexity. Professional indicator. Professional practice. Making the EP understandable. Simplification. Institutional distance.
Multimodal indicators	Casual attire and handheld mobile phone filming create an informal and self-produced aesthetic within the EP setting. He speaks directly to the camera in a conversational and informal tone, while standing in front of monitors and microphones. The video incorporates clips from external sources alongside animated visual elements such as flags and graphic overlays. Documents and textual inserts function as evidences for his discussion about a specific case in Cyprus concerning potential fraud allegations.

Item 13:

Chaos in the European Parliament **Posted 14th November 2024** https://www.instagram.com/reel/DCWp0JCOZeT/?igsh=czQ5anJmYmhqdnNr "This is not okay, we need to have high standards…It's actually a problem…This is an embarrassment…The vote has finished, it was a bit of a fiasco…**"**	
Visual sequence: Brief selfie-style shots of Fidias, while the majority of the reel consists of edited parliamentary footage, security-style clips, and inserts of speeches by other MEPs.	
Analytical dimension	Coding
Theme	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona Framing the European Parliament
Categories	Anchor; Filler; The EP as complex & confusing; The EP as distant & elitist
Code/s	Performed non-expertise. Parasocial relations. Informal characterization. Amateur aesthetics. Front-stage environment.

	Highlight complexity. Professional indicator. Professional practice. Institutional distance.
Multimodal indicators	Casual attire and selfie POV framing reinforce the concept of informality and personalization. The clips incorporate edited footage from multiple camera sources, including security camera-style recordings and inserts of speeches by other Members of the European Parliament. The reel focuses on the parliamentary environment and practices rather than Fidias.

Item 14:

Exposing the Secret of the European Parliament **Posted 30th November 2024** https://www.instagram.com/reel/DDAAQXGNYfW/?igsh=dHNrNDB0NDhtNmE1 "I honestly feel embarrassed to expose but this is the truth**."**	
Visual sequence: Fidias in selfie POV as he moves from inside to outside the conference, using dynamic zooms, 360-degree camera movements, humorous edits, and on-screen captions to create a dramatic narrative.	
Analytical dimension	Coding
Theme	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona Framing the European Parliament
Categories	Anchor; Filler; The EP as complex & confusing; The EP as distant & elitist
Code/s	Parasocial relations. Informal characterization. Amateur aesthetics. Back-stage environment. Front-stage environment. Highlight complexity. Professional indicator. Professional practice. Institutional distance.
Multimodal indicators	Casual clothing, combined with dramatic and humorous audiovisual elements reinforce a playful yet staged presentation style. Upbeat music, comedic background audio enables a fast-paced editing structure that transitions the audiences between the conference and external spaces. The video implies different camera angles, including zoom in/oir

	effects, 360-degree rotation, and selfie POV framing to create motion. Lowered voice delivery accompanied with on-screen captions ("exposing the secret…") to increase suspense and narrative framing.

Item 15:

The new EU Government Explained **Posted 6th December 2024** https://www.instagram.com/reel/DDPU8T_NcvE/?igsh=MjhyanBkcnloaHR0 "...The deal is sealed…Their work will directly affect your life in the next 5 years of their mandate…Do you have any thoughts about the commission that your country proposed? Let me know in the comment below please!"	
Visual sequence: Fidias causally explains the approval and role of the European Commission with a humorous and comedical tone of communication, AI edit, inserted images, and playful gestures while sitting relaxed in front of a Christmas tree.	
Analytical dimension	Coding
Theme	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona Framing the European Parliament
Categories	Anchor; Filler; The EP as complex & confusing; The EP as distant & elitist
Code/s	Performed non-expertise Parasocial relations. Informal characterization. Amateur aesthetics. Back-stage environment. Highlight complexity. Simplification. Institutional distance.
Multimodal indicators	Casual attire, relaxed body posture, and comedic performance style create an informal and approachable presentation of both Fidias and The EP politics. The reel incorporates comedic AI-generated edits, blinking visual effects, sound effects, and inserted images to maintain the engagement. Additional performative elements, including his acting of nearly fall, casually sitting in a chair, pointing toward the camera, and holding Christmas gifts in front of the Christmas tree, communicate a picture of playful and non-traditional political communication style.

Item 16:

Where Does the EU's Budget Come From? **Posted on 11st December 2024** https://www.instagram.com/reel/DDcM6rwO41n/?igsh=Nmp3Y2F5NGN5d29x "How do they make all this money?....What do you think about how the EU is collecting its money?Do you have any proposals to make it better? Let me know in the comment below."	
Visual sequence: Fidias moving through various parliamentary paces while whispering to the camera about the EU budget, combined with animated money graphics and humour blooper-like gestures that contradict the formal institutional setting.	
Analytical dimension	Coding
Theme	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona Framing the European Parliament
Categories	Anchor; Filler; The EP as complex & confusing; The EP as accessible & relatable
Code/s	Performed non-expertise. Parasocial relations. Informal characterization. Amateur aesthetics. Front-stage environment. Highlight complexity. Professional indicator. Making the EP understandable. Simplification. Institutional distance.
Multimodal indicators	Fidias whispers directly to the camera while discussing the EU budget, creating the impression of sharing a secret or an exclusive information. Animated effects, including raining money graphics and shifting color overlays collectively dramatize the discussion of financial matters. Together with sound effects, animated logos, and infographic-style visuals, these elements construct a highly stylized presentation. Casual attire contrasts with the formal parliamentary environment, where Fidias moves frequently from sitting in the parliamentary chairs, standing behind the podiums, and walking alone through institutional spaces while pointing at and talking with the camera. The reel ends with Fidias sticking out his tongue toward the camera, introducing a humour blooper-like ending that strengthens his playful and comedy persona.

Item 17:

Europe is Confusing Everyone **Posted 13th December 2024** https://www.instagram.com/reel/DDhWiQNsTCi/?igsh=MTlpampseWJqaDd6Zw== "I am going crazy…Europe, there are enough councils, please be more creative with your names. You are *fucking* (beep) confusing everyone."	
Visual sequence: Vlog-style footage of Fidias inside the European Parliament expressing confusion and frustration regarding The EP institutional structures through dramatic gestures, direct camera address, body language, and fast-paced editing techniques.	
Analytical dimension	Coding
Theme	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona Framing the European Parliament
Categories	Anchor; Filler; The EP as complex & confusing
Code/s	Performed non-expertise. Informal characterization. Amateur aesthetics. Professional indicator. Back-stage environment. Front-stage environment. Highlight complexity. Institutional distance.
Multimodal indicators	Fidias holds a European flag while dramatizing confusion, stating "I'm going crazy, it seems everything in Europe is called council." Casual clothing and behind-the-sences aesthetics reinforce informality and non-expertise. Exaggerated body language (lying on the floor) constructs the EP as chaotic and overwhelming. Fast-paced editing, inserted video clips, animated graphics, and sound effects contribute to a humorous and emotionally intensified presentation. The usage of curse words strengthens the emotion.

Item 18:

You Decide My Political Priorities **Posted 23rd December 2024** https://www.instagram.com/reel/DD7GkeusQVz/?igsh=MXE5bnZ0Ynl4MmdkcQ==

"I want to know what you guys think I should do here in the parliament.Write in the comments and I will read them all and consider**."**	
Visual sequence: Fidias moves through formal parliamentary spaces while shifting between different movements, combined with close-up zooms, animated graphics, and humorous insert clips.	
Analytical dimension	Coding
Theme	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona Framing the European Parliament
Categories	Anchor; Filler The EP as distant & elitist
Code/s	Performed non-expertise. Parasocial relations. Informal characterization. Amateur aesthetics. Front-stage environment. Professional indicators. Institutional distance.
Multimodal indicators	Confident body language and close-up zooms emphasize Fidias's smug facial expression as he states that he has been a member of the EP for six months. Animated graphics. logos, and visual effects are used throughout the reels to dramatize key takeaways for the audiences. A cutaway clip of Fidia's "dabbing" is inserted while discussing his future role in Parliament, strengthening a humorous and ironic tone. The reel is filmed within parliamentary spaces associated with voting and institutional procedures; however, Fidis continuously shifts between different movements, such as walking around the room, sitting at an official desk, and dancing toward the camera at the end of the clip.

Item 19:

How the EU Makes Laws **Posted 17th January 2025** https://www.instagram.com/reel/DE8HhTgxZ3R/?igsh=OHhhNXJreTZwN20= "I am shocked at how slow the EP is…I'm curious to hear about what you think, let me know in the process below, oh no I mean in the comments below."
Visual sequence: Fidias moving through parliamentary backstage areas while reacting dramatically to the slowness of the EP.

Analytical dimension	Coding
Theme	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona Framing the European Parliament
Categories	Anchor; Filler; The EP as complex & confusing; The EP as accessible & relatable
Code/s	Performed non-expertise. Parasocial relations. Informal characterization. Amateur aesthetics. Back-stage environment. Highlight complexity. Professional indicator. Making the EP understandable. Simplification. Institutional distance.
Multimodal indicators	Fidias in casual attire with T-shirt and jeans, moves through backstage parliamentary environments such as corridors and adjacent rooms. His expression of "shocking" (I am shocked) accompanied by lightning visual effects to intensify the emotions. Animated effects and sound design are used consistently throughout the clip to dramatize his critique of the EP. Slow-motion footage of Members of the European Parliament voting is inserted during his vlog, contrasting their formal and slow-paced actions with his fast-paced, dynamic presentation.

Item 20:

Why Politicians Don't Innovate **Posted 18th January 2025** https://www.instagram.com/reel/DE-Q5tPMTLR/?igsh=c2NmamR2c3lhZnps "Politicians are stuck to the same boring ideas…I have made a lot of mistakes as a member of the European Parliament, and I will make more."	
Visual sequence: Fidias stands at the front of the EP surrounded by flags while speaking close-up to the camera.	
Analytical dimension	Coding
Theme	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona Framing the European Parliament
Categories	Anchor; Filler; The EP as complex & confusing; The EP as

	distant & elitist
Code/s	Performed non-expertise. Parasocial relations. Amateur aesthetics. Informal characterization. Front-stage environment. Highlight complexity. Professional indicator. Professional practice. Institutional distance. Simplification.
Multimodal indicators	Fidias stands at the front of the EP surrounded by flags while wearing casual attire and speaking directly to the camera. A visible microphone attached to his clothing reinforces the impression of vlogging and influencer style communication. Rapid cuts from other video clips, animated visual effects, and sound effects are used to intensify key messages. Close camera angle and direct eye contact generate an intimate and conversational atmosphere, strengthening the impression of a face-to-face interaction with the online audiences.

Appendix II

The table below illustrates a description of the procedure. However, it is worth mentioning that the analytical process involves a back and forth movement with the Instagram reels to decide the most relevant themes and codes.

Meaning Unit	**Condensed Meaning Unit**	**Multimodal indicators**	**Code**	**Category**	**Theme**
Fidias expresses confusion through statements such as “I may miss something; “I am shocked”, hesitations, and self-deprecating remarks about his own competence.	Expressions of confusion and lowered competence convey an image of non-expertise and relatability.	Hesitations, self-deprecating humor, casual language, slang, curse word, informal tone, spontaneous delivery, pauses, unstructured speech, playing confusion	Performed non-expertise	Filler (Back-stage + Performed back-stage)	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona

Fidias speaks casually to the camera while wearing informal clothing inside the EP.	Casual dialogs and clothing construct a relatable public persona.	Casual attire, direct eye contact, handheld camera, framing, conversational tone, every day reference, normal life narrative, normal person humour, personal storytelling	Informal characterization	Filler (Back-stage + Performed back-stage)	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona
Fidias positions himself through raw and “performatively” unfiltered content production.	Amateur aesthetics enhance authenticity and transparency in content production.	Shaky camera work, low-quality visuals, raw editing, visible technical equipment, unpolished framing, transparency in production.	Amateur aesthetics	Filler (Back-stage + Performed back-stage)	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona
Fidias films in corridors, staircases, and outside parliamentary spaces.	Informal backstage environments create intimacy and foster trust through transparency.	Corridors, staircases, outdoor parliamentary areas, casual interactions, unscripted moments.	Back-stage environment	Filler (Back-stage + Performed back-stage)	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona
Fidias directly addresses online audiences using expressions such as “you guys” and encourages interaction through platform features.	Interactive language and audience engagement reinforce parasocial relations.	“You guys”, “we/us”, CTA "comment below”, conversational address	Parasocial relation: Interactive features & Interactive language	Filler (Back-stage + Performed back-stage)	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona
Fidias appears in parliamentary environments such as the chamber while explaining	Formal institutional settings communicate a sense of political legitimacy and	Parliamentary chamber, formal setting, working environment.	Front stage environment	Anchor: Front-stage	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona

parliamentary procedures and politic-related content or participating in institutional duties.	authority.				
Fidias documents in detail his performances of institutional duties.	Professional practices in the EP portrays Fidias as a reliable yet relatable and authentic politician.	Reading documents, speaking in parliament, voting procedures, work activities.	Professional practice	Anchor: Front-stage	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona
Fidias emphasizes his political identity through visible markers of political responsibility.	Professional indicators enhance credibility and his role in politics.	Official badges, parliamentary documents, microphones, voting materials, institutional symbols.	Professional indicator	Anchor: Front-stage	Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona
Fidias frequently emphasizes how difficult and complicated to comprehend parliamentary procedures.	The EP is framed as complex and difficult to navigate for the ordinary.	Statements about confusion, bureaucratic language, complex documents, serious tone	Highlight complexity	The EP as complex & confusing	Framing the EP
Fidias attempts to explain parliamentary procedures through simplified narratives with easily understandable terms.	Complex parliamentary processes are simplified for better understanding.	Infographics, explanatory editing, simple language, visual demonstrations, “I will explain it for you”	Simplification	The EP as complex & confusing	Framing the EP
Politicians and parliamentary structures are portrayed as exclusive and distant from ordinary citizens.	The EP is represented as distant and elitist.	Large institutional spaces, formal settings, symbolic imagery of authority	Institutional distance	The EP as distant & elitist	Framing the EP

Fidias explains parliamentary activities using relatable language and visual aids.	The EP is made understandable and approachable for online audiences.	Formal environment combined with casual persona, humor, conversational explanations, relatable examples.	Making the EP "understand able"	The EP as accessible & relatable	Framing the EP

Appendix III

The following table outlines the identified themes and their given definitions in the context of this thesis.

Theme	**Definition**
Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona	The strategic construction of legitimacy and authenticity through multimodal performances of non-expertise, informality and audience engagement.
Framing the European Parliament	The representation of the European Parliament through selective emphasis on institutional structures, political complex, and accessibility.

Appendix IV

The table below presents the identified categories within the chosen themes of this study.

Theme 1 *Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona*	
Category *Filler: Back stage + Performed back stage*	**Category** *Anchor: Front-stage*

Theme 2 *Framing the European Parliament*		
Category *The EP as Complex &*	**Category** *The EP as Distant & Elitist*	**Category**

Confusing		*The EP as Accessible & Relatable*

Appendix V

Qualitative content analysis coding templates

Theme 1 *Constructing the Relatable Amateur Persona*	
Category: Anchor (Front-stage)	Category: Filler (Back-stage + Performed back-stage)
Codes Front-stage environment, Professional practices, Professional indicators	**Codes** Performed non-expertise, Informal Characterization, Amateur aesthetics, Back stage environment, Parasocial relation (Interactive features & interactive language).

Theme 2 *Framing the European Parliament*		
Category: The EP as Complex & Confusing	Category: The EP as Distant & Elitist	Category: The EP as Accessible & Relatable
Codes Highlight complexity, Simplification.	**Codes** Institutional distance.	**Codes** Making the EP "understandable".

Appendix VI

The table below outlines the operational definition of the analytical codes applied throughout the multimodal thematic analysis.

Category: Filler (Back-stage + Performed back-stage)

Code words	Definition
Performed non-expertise	Strategic displays of confusion, uncertainty, or poor competence in order to foster authenticity, relatability, and ordinariness.
Informal characterization	The presentation of a casual, humorous, and approachable persona through an interplay of verbal and non-verbal language, and self-presenation.
Amateur aesthetics	Deliberately unpolished audiovisual elements that construct spontaneity, rawness, and local-produced content creation.
Back stage environment	Behind-the-scenes settings that offer the audiences a perceived access to personal and everyday moments.
Parasocial relation (Interactive features & interactive language)	Communicative strategies that create asymmetrical emotional bonds between audience and creator, which in turn establish intimacy, belonging, familiarity, and audience engagement through direct address and platform-specific interaction.

Category: Anchor (Front-stage)

Code words	Definition
Front-stage environment	Formal institutional settings characterized by professionalism, authority, and political practices within the European Parliament.
Professional practices	Representations of political duties, procedures, and politic-related activities that establish legitimacy and competence.
Professional indicators	Visible and physical institutional markers and production elements that signal authority and political identity.

Category: The EP as Complex & Confusing

Code words	Definition
Highlight complexity	Representations of the European Parliament as bureaucratic, complicated, and difficult to navigate.
Simplification	Communicative strategies that explain institutional

	processes through simplified narratives, relatable examples, concrete visuals, and humorous tone.

Category: The EP as Distant & Elitist

Code words	Definition
Institutional distance	Representations of the European Parliament as highly formal,elitist, and excluded from ordinary citizens.

Category: The EP as Accessible & Relatable

Code words	**Definition**
Making the EP "understandable"	The use of informal communication styles and simplified explanations to portray the European Parliament as relatable and easily understandable for the audiences.

Appendix VII

The table below provides an overview of the frequency with which analytical codes were identified across 20 Instagram Reels included in the dataset, organized from highest to lowest frequency. It further outlines the recurrence of the communicative strategies presented in the analysis and offers an initial indication of broader patterns in Fidia's representation of both himself and the European Parliament.

Code words	**Theme / Category Alignment**	**Explanation**	**Findings: Number of posts matching the codes (out of 20)**	**Percentage of Sample**
Informal characterization	Theme 1: Filler (Back-stage)	Fidias speaks casually to the camera while wearing informal clothing inside the EP.	20	100%
Amateur aesthetics	Theme 1: Filler (Back-stage)	Fidias positions himself through raw and "performatively" unfiltered content	20	100%

		production.		
Institutional distance	Theme 2: Framing the European Parliament (The EP as distant & elitist)	Politicians and parliamentary structures are portrayed as exclusive and distant from ordinary citizens.	19	95%
Professional indicator	Theme 1: Anchor (Front-stage)	Fidias emphasizes his political identity through visible markers of political responsibility.	18	90%
Front-stage environment	Theme 1: Anchor (Front-stage)	Fidias appears in parliamentary environments such as the chamber while explaining parliamentary procedures and politic-related content or participating in institutional duties.	17	85%
Highlight complexity	Theme 2: Framing the European Parliament (The EP as complex & confusing)	Fidias frequently emphasizes how difficult and complicated to comprehend parliamentary procedures.	17	85%
Parasocial relation: Interactive features & Interactive language	Theme 1: Filler (Back-stage)	Fidias directly addresses online audiences using expressions such as “you guys” and encourages interaction through platform features.	16	80%
Performed non-expertise	Theme 1: Filler (Back-stage)	Fidias expresses confusion through statements such as “I may miss something; “I am shocked”, hesitations, and self-deprecating remarks about his own competence.	15	75%
Simplification	Theme 2:	Fidias attempts to explain	14	70%

	Framing the European Parliament (The EP as complex & confusing)	parliamentary procedures through simplified narratives with easily understandable terms.		
Back-stage environment	Theme 1: Filler (Back-stage)	Fidias films in corridors, staircases, and outside parliamentary spaces.	9	45%
Making the EP "understandable"	Theme 2: Framing the European Parliament (The EP as accessible & relatable)	Fidias explains parliamentary activities using relatable language and visual aids.	9	45%
Professional practice	Theme 1: Anchor (Front-stage)	Fidias documents in detail his performances of institutional duties.	8	40%

Appendix VIII

Figures

Figure 1

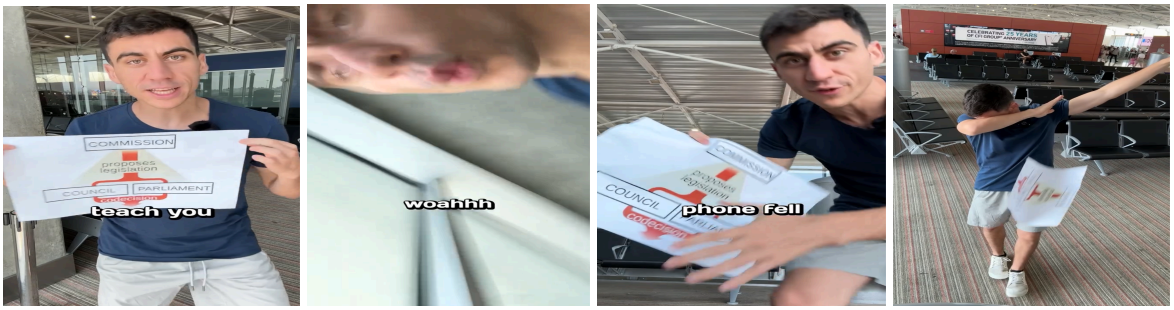


Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

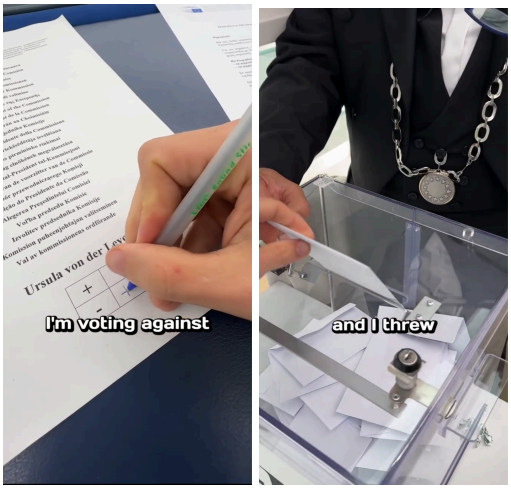


Figure 6

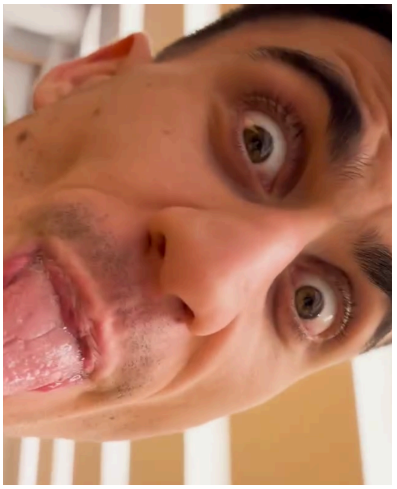


Figure 7 “Europe is confusing everyone”



Figure 8

