Electronic Democracy and its Citizens

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Agenda

1. Introduction

- Individual political communication is a cornerstone of democracy

- Internet may evoke new patterns individual political communication

- Different theories of democracy shape the institutional design and political cultures of contemporary democracies

Which patterns of individual political

communication exist in Germany?

Theories of Democracy

- The German political culture embodies ideas from different political philosophies

- There are republican, liberal, and deliberative models of democracy (Habermas, 1992)

The Republican Tradition

- Necessity of communication between citizens and participation in organisations and community involvement

- Citizens are social and political animals (Dahl, 1989)

The Liberal Tradition

- A method to arriving at political decisions by having the opportunity of accepting or refusing the women and men who are to rule (Schumpeter, 1994)

- Citizens need to inform themselves about political programs and participate in formal elections

The Deliberative Model

- A democratic process, which is supposed to generate legitimacy through a procedure of opinion and will-formation (Habermas, 2006)

- Citizens need to participate in and respond to a public discourse (Habermas, 1992; 2006)

Changing Media Environment and Models of Democracy

- From a republican perspective – cyberdemocracy

- From a liberal perspective – electronic democratisation

- From a deliberative perspective – a Habermasean electronic democracy

Individual Political Communication

Form \ Medium	Offline Media	Online Media
Informatory Communication	TV news, newspapers, political magazines	reading political information, visit websites of politicians
Interpersonal Communication	political discussions, contact with politicians	political discussions (internet forums, chat), contact with politicians
Participatory Communication	letters to the editors, signing petitions, voting, membership in political organisations	letters to the editors, signing e-petitions

4.   A Typology - Method

Empirically based Typology

- A typology maps a population by use of specific variables

- Provides a more vivid impression than variable-based descriptions

- Uncovers combinations of activities – patterns

- Empirical construction of types:

  People with similar political communication habits are aggregated by means of factor and cluster analysis

4.   A Typology - Method

Data Basis

- Long-term panel survey „Political Online Communication"
(DFG Project, Ilmenau University of Technology)

- Secondary analysis of cross sectional data (4th wave 2005)

- Sample represents the population aged 16 and older in German-speaking households

Method

- First step: three factor analysis – 14 factors

- Second step: hierarchical cluster analysis – five clusters (types)

- Third step: cluster centre analysis – cases per cluster and identification of the dominating values of the factors in every cluster

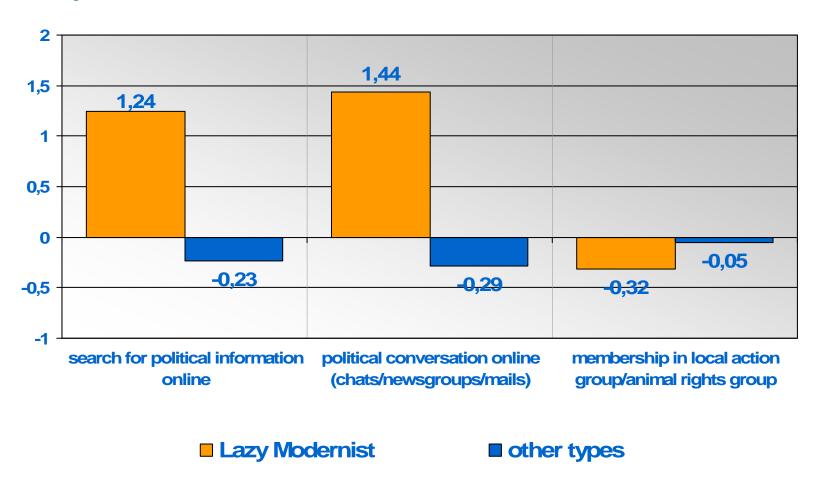## Five Types of Individual Political Communication

Type	Size	Description/Attributes	Name
1	46%	General avoidance of political communication/ political activities	**Passive Mainstreamer**
2	14%	Limited political communication/workers' union membership, voting participation	**Egocentric Lobbyist**
3	15%	Multifaceted political communication/low Internet use; membership in local action group/animal rights group	**Traditional Activist**
4	7%	Multifaceted, comprehensive political communication/ membership in political party; donations for political org.	**Involved Extrovert**
5	18%	Special political communication/high affinity to Internet communication; avoidance of political „outdoor activities"	**Lazy Modernist**

Lazy Modernist – Online Activities

Bar chart titled "Lazy Modernist – Online Activities" comparing Lazy Modernist (orange) and other types (blue) across three categories:

- **search for political information online**: Lazy Modernist 1,24; other types -0,23
- **political conversation online (chats/newsgroups/mails)**: Lazy Modernist 1,44; other types -0,29
- **membership in local action group/animal rights group**: Lazy Modernist -0,32; other types -0,05

Legend: ■ Lazy Modernist   ■ other types

Five Types and the Models of Democracy

Type	Republican model	Liberal model	Deliberative model
Passive Mainstreamer	-	+	-
Egocentric Lobbyist	-	+	-
Traditional Activist	+	-	+
Involved Extrovert	+	-	+
Lazy Modernist	+	-	+

5. Conclusions

- Only the Lazy Modernist uses the Internet for her/his political communication to a relevant extent

- Lazy Modernist - the "political online avantgarde"?

- Further diffusion of new political e-offers (e-voting, e-petition, online-dialogues, web 2.0)

- Future: multifaceted practices of digital citizenship and further theoretical conceptions of electronic democracies

Thank you for your attention!

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