Divided they participate?
Social Inequalities in Online Participation

Christoph Lutz
@lutzid

Brown Bag Lunch, BI Norwegian Business School
2 September 2015
The Dissertation Project
Approach

1. Forms and definition of online participation
   Systematic literature review
   **Goal**: Explore topic, generate first propositions, encourage dialogue
   Journal article: *First Monday* (published July 2014)

2. Drivers of participation
   Representative survey
   **Goal**: Quantify online participation drivers and identify profiles of online participants
   Conference paper: ICA14

3. Patterns of participation
   Qualitative Study: Focus groups and online communities
   **Goal**: Differentiation of online participation along 7 social milieus
   Conference presentation: Connected Life 2015
   Journal article: *Social Media + Society* (under review)
The Dissertation Committee

Miriam Meckel

- corporate communication
- social media
- (digital) journalism
- CMC
- philosophical understanding of the Internet

Anabel Quan-Haase

- social networks
- social media
- social capital
- digital humanities
- scholarly digital communication
- Internet studies
- CMC
- serendipity
Article 1: Forms of Participation
Systematic Literature Review

- Title: (Online OR Internet OR Digital OR Social Media) AND (Participation OR Engagement)
- English language, peer-reviewed publications (journals & conference proceedings)
- Databases: ISI Web of Science (503), ProQuest (463), EBSCO (587), Mendeley (253)

1. Total of 1806 hits,
2. 840 multiple entries removed,
3. Scan of titles and abstracts, 295 clearly irrelevant papers removed,
4. Categorization according to overall field of inquiry, resulting in five research areas,
5. Filtering out too narrow and too broad papers.
Increasing Relevance

ProQuest results from 1990

Lutz, Hoffmann, & Meckel (2014)
Participation Areas

Lutz, Hoffmann, & Meckel (2014)
Research Trends

- Political
- Business
- Health
- Education
- Culture

Lutz, Hoffmann, & Meckel (2014)
Online participation

The creation and sharing of content on the Internet addressed to a specific audience and driven by a social purpose.
Article 2: Participation Divide(s)
The Internet’s Participatory Potential

TIME

PERSON OF THE YEAR

You.

Yes, you.
You control the Information Age.
Welcome to your world.

WEB 2.0
Most people have access to the Internet and go online regularly.
...To The Participation Divide

Few(er) make use of the web’s participatory potential.
Communicate/speak out publicly about political issues online
Previous Research

Hargittai & Walejko (2008)

*Age, skills and SES predict OCC; 4 types of content*

Correa (2010)

*Psychological factors and demographics predict OCC, SES does not; aggregates 10 different types of content into one measure*
Previous Research

Schradie (2011)

*SES affects user propensity to create and share content, effects differ by online activity; focus on activities rather than content type*

Blank (2013)

*SES affects user propensity to create and share content, effects differ by online activity; 3 types of content: skilled, social & entertainment, political*
Current OII Study

Who produces content online?

Different forms of content

Skilled Content  Social & Entertainment Content  Political Content
Hypothesis: Online self-efficacy and privacy concerns mediate the impact of demographics on online content creation.

Cognitive Attributes: Privacy Concerns, Self-Efficacy

Demographics: Age, Gender, Education

Environment

Personal Dispositions

Online Content Creation: Social, Skilled, Political

Behavior
…And the winner is
Article 3: Participation in Different Milieus
Intro and Overview

- Research in the tradition of **digital divides** research

- **Milieu perspective** absent in digital inequalities research

- Drawing on **Bourdieu** as theoretical framework
Qualitative Study

- **Focus groups** and **online communities**: 12 groups with 8 participants per group

*How do citizens from different Internet milieus define and conceptualize online participation and engagement?*
*Does the everyday understanding match the academic understanding?*
Cooperation with Sinus: Internet milieus

**Digital Outsiders**
- Internetferne Verunsicherte
  - Überforderte Offliner bzw. Internet-Gelegenheitsnutzer. Selbstgenügsamkeit, Sittlichkei
- Ordnungsfordernde Internet-Laien

**Digital Immigrants**
- Verantwortungsbedachte Etablierte
  - Aufgeklärtes Establishment mit Führungsbewusstsein. Selektive Internet-Nutzer. Verantwortungsorientierte Grundhaltung gegenüber digita
  - lem Fortschritt.
- Postmaterielle Skeptiker
Cooperation with Sinus: Internet milieus

Digital Natives

Unbekümmerte Hedonisten

Effizienzorientierte Performer
Leistungsorientierte Internet-Profis mit ausgeprägter Convenience- und Nutzen-Orientierung. Professionalisierung als Leitprinzip.

Digital Souveräne
Digitale Avantgarde mit ausgeprägter individualistischer Grundhaltung. Suche nach Unabhängigkeit in Denken und Handeln.

sinus
Digital Outsiders (37%)  Digital Immigrants (19%)  Digital Natives (44%)
Group 1: Natives

- **Pragmatic approach** towards online communities
- Online participation more pronounced than in groups 2 and 3
- But there are also some **skeptics**

*I am not actively participating on any Internet site or platform, because I try to stay away from the virtual world as much as possible and not miss the real life. I only use the internet when i need information; communicate with friends, or want to buy or sell something* (Patrick; careless hedonist)
Group 1: Natives

- Lage differences between milieus
- **Facebook task** suitable to crave out the differences, e.g., between careless hedonists and digital sovereigns

**Well, I see ads, new photos of family and friends. What I also see are short videos of my favorite series «Berling tag und Nacht».** (Vanessa; careless hedonist)

**My start profile basically replaces the daily newspaper, because through selected connections I receive updates and news reports.** (Denis; digital sovereign)
Group 2: Immigrants

- Somewhat **more interaction** than in group 1
- Large **variance** in participation intensity and scope
- **Age effects** affect the forms/domains of participation

My interests, information and appointments in my function as a youth adviser in the Alps association can be found on the homepage www.alpenverein-hochtaunus.de. [...] I’m actively engaged on this site because I myself and my son (in the youth group) climb and because I can best give my tasks in youth work to interested families via the homepage. (Sibylle; responsible established)
Group 3: Outsiders

- Intense interaction, sometimes on a very personal level
- Largest variance in how the tasks were solved
- Most active users in online communities, but also most **skeptical** ones

*I’m very often on Deutschlandradio Kultur. That’s enough, i don’t need anything else.* (Joachim; law-and-order Internet amateur)

*I equate registering with active action in the sense of engagement.* (Thorsten; law-and-order Internet amateur)
Main Findings and Take Aways

Large milieu **differences** in participation

High status ≠ high engagement

**Cultural aspects** very important

**Bourdieu**’s theory useful in this regard
Thanks for your Attention

Institute for Media and Communications Management
University of St. Gallen
Blumenbergplatz 9
CH-9000 St. Gallen
Discussion

• How is the situation in Norway?
• What could be done about participation divides?
• Which theories are suitable to describe participation divides?
• Which additional factors should be considered to study social media and online participation?
• What about online representation and big data (divides)?
References


References


Data and Method

Online survey with 1488 participants

Representative distribution of gender, age and region of German Internet population, slight overrepresentation of highly educated users

Structural equation modeling
Measurement

Online Content Creation

Replication of Blank’s (2013) typology of online content

Self-Efficacy

3 items from previous studies (Compeau et al., 1999; Venkatesh et al., 2003; Venkatesh & Bala, 2008)

Privacy Concerns

3 items from Malhotra et al. (2004)

=> Cronbach’s $\alpha$, CR and AVE all above threshold